The Moon is Not the Moon:
Non-Transcendence in the Poetry of Han-shan and Ryōkan

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Abstract

The Zen (Ch'an) poets Han-shan (circa 6^{th}-9^{th} C.) and Ryōkan (1758-1831) participate in literary activity, reclusion, and ordinary emotions in a manner that questions their typical image as models of transcendence. They participate in literary activity without attachment to either linguistic adequacy or a dualistic notion of "beyond words," and poetry serves as their mode of communication from reclusion. Reclusion is a context to realize the nature of the conventional world rather than a means of transcendence to an ultimate realm and is significant as a social and political act. Interpreted through the functional model of language, the poets' expressions of sorrow experienced in their reclusive lives embody the Zen ideal of selflessness. Ultimately, the poetry of both Han-shan and Ryōkan supports a non-transcendent, or trans-descendent, ideal consistent with the nondual logic of Zen Buddhism and contrary to scholarship that assumes a dualistic view of Zen enlightenment.

Résumé

La manière dont les poètes Zen Han-shan (vers VI^{e}-IX^{e} siècle) et Ryōkan (1758-1831) participent à l'activité littéraire, à la réclusion et aux émotions ordinaires remet en question l'image typique de modèles de transcendance qui leur est attribuée. Ils participent à l'activité littéraire sans attachement à la rectitude littéraire ou à une notion dualiste de ce qui est "au-delà des mots" et se servent de la poésie comme un moyen de communiquer à partir de l'état de réclusion. Plutôt qu'un moyen de transcender le monde ordinaire pour accéder à un royaume de l'absolu, la réclusion est un contexte permettant de réaliser la nature du monde conventionnel, de même qu'un acte social et politique. Interprétée au moyen d'un modèle fonctionnel du langage, la tristesse de la réclusion qu'expriment les poètes incarne l'idéal Zen de l'absence de moi. En bout de ligne, et contrairement à ce que suggère la recherche présupposant une vision dualiste de l'éveil du Zen, la poésie de Han-shan et Ryōkan s'inscrit en faveur d'un idéal non pas transcendant mais "trans-descendant" en accord avec la logique non dualiste du bouddhisme Zen.

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Conventions

The names for those whose primary language is Japanese or Chinese are listed with their surnames first. I have listed Ryūichi Abé with his surname last since that is how his name appears in English works. The Wade-Giles system for Romanization has been used for Chinese words and names and the Hepburn system of Romanization for Japanese. Since the Sanskrit terms, nirvana and samsara, are now commonly found in English, they will appear without diacritical marks.

In-text citations follow the pattern (Author page), or (Author year, page) when necessary. However, poem numbers have been added with the # sign preceding the poem number where appropriate: (Author #poem, page). The book and chapter numbers cited from D.C. Lau's translation of *The Analects* have been included preceding the page number. My copy of Red Pine's *The Collected Songs of Cold Mountain* does not have page numbers; therefore, only the poem number appears, except for citations from the introduction for which I have provided page numbers. When quoting only a section of a longer poem, I have put the word "from" before the author and page number.

When copying poems, I have tried to follow the punctuation of the original, and some appear without a final period.

Chapter One

Han-shan and Ryōkan: The Problem of Transcendence

Han-shan, the legendary Chinese poet (circa 6^{th} -9^{th} C.), and the Japanese poet Ryōkan (1758-1831) are both hermits and Zen (Ch'an) Buddhists who are often associated with an ideal of transcendence. Han-shan in particular is seen as an embodiment of Zen wisdom and is depicted as being beyond the ordinary concerns and emotions of everyday people. The image of Ryōkan is more complex, especially since much more is known about him historically; nevertheless, many considered him to be a man who transcended the dust of ordinary life and kept his distance from worldly pursuits at his hermitage. Both poets are well known for their often unconventional, rule-breaking poetry and their simple, direct language that goes beyond tradition and refuses to conform to societal norms.

However, at the same time, both poets display emotions of sadness and desire that contrast with the Buddhist ideal of non-attachment. Furthermore, the content of their poems and the act of writing poetry itself suggest a greater involvement in social affairs than their reclusive image presupposes. These contradictions question the nature of their transcendence as it is usually imagined.

Han-shan and Ryōkan as Cultural Icons

Han-shan

According to his poems, Han-shan appears to have been an unsuccessful Confucian scholar who initially withdrew to a life of private scholarship and farming with his wife and child until he eventually isolated himself at Cold Mountain (Ch. *han shan*), the place from which he takes his name, and spent his days investigating the Buddhist Dharma. Han-shan became a cultural icon, however, more as a result of later legends and paintings that glorify his eccentric, eremitic lifestyle as a manifestation of Zen (or Ch'an) enlightenment. The preface[1] to his poems by Lü-ch'iu Yin establishes Han-shan as a Zen lunatic who would have nothing to do with society or monastic institutions and instead wandered around laughing wildly and disappearing into the mountains. Supposedly, his friend Shih-te worked as cook in the temple and provided Han-shan with leftovers to sustain him in reclusion. The master of the temple, Feng-kan, identified Han-shan and Shih-te as the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, respectively, but others only saw them as poor fools. As Feng-kan noted: "When you see him you don't recognize him, when you recognize him you don't see him" (Snyder 1966, 32). Of course, Han-shan and Shih-te refuse to be admired as anything special.[2]

Beginning as early as the 12th century, artists, inspired by this legend, have painted images of Han-shan and Shih-te together, usually pictured with a scroll and a broom, each with a big toothy grin and long, frazzled hair. These two

[1] Dated by Pulleyblank to be from the late-T'ang (Pulleyblank 174).
[2] Han-shan mentions Shih-te and Feng-kan only once in his poems (see Henricks 80).

figures even made it into a play of the popular *kabuki* theater of Japan in which Han-shan (Kanzan in Japanese) and Shih-te (Jittoku in Japanese) dance and goof around gawking at a scroll that is then shown to the audience to be completely blank (Leggett 169-171). At the site of Cold Mountain today is Cold Mountain Temple, which features a wooden sculpture and portraits of Han-shan and Shih-te and also provides Han-shan souvenirs to tourists (Kahn 31).

Besides the popular iconography and legends, Han-shan's poetry has also been highly esteemed by the Zen tradition and has been printed alongside the recorded sayings of famous Zen masters (see Iritani and Matsumura). Han-shan's poetry rarely made it into the official literary collections of secular society, however, and did not make it into any collection of T'ang poetry until 1707. At the same time, a tradition of writing poems in imitation of Han-shan did begin around the Sung dynasty (960-1278) (Kahn 2). In the 20th century, Han-shan found his way into the West with a number of translations in English and French. His image has been particularly popularized by Gary Snyder's lively and colloquial translation and has been connected to the Beat generation and counter-culture movement through the mention of Snyder's translations in Jack Kerouac's popular, Buddhist and mountain-hiking inspired novel *The Dharma Bums*.

Ryōkan

In 1758, Ryōkan was born in a small fishing village called Izumozaki where his father was the village headman and Shintō priest. As a youth Ryōkan enjoyed reading and studied the classics. He was expected to take over his

father's position in the village but instead entered the Sōtō Zen monastery at Kōshō-ji in 1777 and later trained at Entsū-ji, beginning around 1780, where he continued to study literature and writing. His monastic name is Ryōkan Taigu, "Taigu" meaning "Great Fool" and "Ryōkan" meaning "Goodly Tolerance" (Watson 1977, 5). In 1790, Ryōkan became head monk at the temple and received *inka*, official transmission to teach the Dharma from his master. When Ryōkan's master died the next year, he left the monastery and spent some years wandering the Japanese countryside until he eventually settled outside of his home village in a small hut on Mount Kugami at the age of forty. His decision to live in reclusion and not rejoin the monastery as an abbot was probably due in part to contention between two branches of the Sōtō school at that time. On Mount Kugami, he sustained himself and mingled with the villagers through his begging rounds. In the village, he became known for playing with children, drinking *sake*, and being forgetful — activities that fit the image of the simple and innocent Zen mind — and his poetry and calligraphy received attention by the locals. Unconventional for Buddhist monks, at the end of his life he fell in love with the nun Teishin and their relationship entailed a memorable poetic exchange that has been preserved in print.

Many of Ryōkan's friends began developing legendary biographies of his life, after he died in 1831, as they greatly admired his behavior and personality.[3] These legends emphasize Ryōkan's sincerity, playfulness, and selfless concern for others. Peter Haskel makes the insightful point that one would expect

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[3] For a discussion of these stories see Ryūichi Abé's article, "Commemorating Ryōkan: The Origin and Growth of Ryōkan's Biographies" (in Abé and Haskel 76-87).

Ryōkan's role as an eccentric recluse to be looked down upon by Japan's conformist culture (Abé and Haskel 20). Nevertheless, the simplicity of his poor lifestyle has made Ryōkan into a popular icon in Japan. His poems are read by many, literally thousands of books on his life have appeared in the last century (see Abé and Haskel xii), and the anecdotes of his life have been included in collections of Zen stories, such as Paul Rep's English language collection, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*.

Interpretations of Han-shan

Despite the awareness that Zen is based in a philosophy of nonduality, translators and critics of Han-shan and Ryōkan have typically analyzed their poems with a dualistic interpretation of enlightenment and Buddhist insight. In the conventional view, enlightenment is reified as a distinct state of tranquillity and wisdom that is divorced from delusive passions and ignorance. Based on this assumption, critics often glorify Han-shan as a sage beyond the ordinary desires of the world, and in their struggle to make sense of Ryōkan's feelings of sorrow, some label him as a Zen failure. Some critics do make room for the significance of ordinary emotion in the authors' poetry but never do they relate it clearly to Buddhist realization. In Mahāyāna nondual logic, however, delusion is no different from enlightenment, and this thesis aims to provide a nondual interpretation of Han-shan and Ryōkan through the application of this logic.

Burton Watson comments that the uniqueness and attractiveness of Han-shan is his display of "intense emotion" that includes feelings of loneliness and

melancholy in contrast to the typical "calm, cool air of emotional detachment" of other Buddhist poets in the T'ang dynasty (618-907) (Watson 1992, 36). While alluring to readers, this emotion provides a dilemma for critics and scholars who attempt to reconcile Han-shan's expressions with the Zen ideal of non-attachment that he is supposed to portray. As Watson explains:

> The commentators have been forced to resort to some drastic wrenching in their interpretations of the poems by the fact that Han-shan, though at times speaking from a pinnacle of calm and enlightenment, just as often seems to be profoundly involved in the misgivings and anxieties that enlightenment is supposed to dispel. (Watson 1962, 14)

Watson goes on to explain that commentators often adopt the view that the suffering expressed by Han-shan is merely a means to sympathize with the suffering of others in order to effect the Mahāyāna bodhisattva ideal of postponing complete enlightenment in order to save all sentient beings (an interpretation we will later see applied to Ryōkan).

> A man, once enlightened, is expected to stay that way. Zen commentators have therefore been forced to regard Han-shan's professions of loneliness, doubt, and discouragement not as revelations of his own feelings but as vicarious recitals of the ills of unenlightened men which he can still sympathize with, though he himself has transcended them. He thus becomes in effect the traditional bodhisattva figure — compassionate, in the world, but not of it. (Watson 1962, 14)

In his introduction to Red Pine's translations of Han-shan, John Blofield adopts the role of the Eastern Romanticist in providing the stereotypical, absolutist, and dualistic misinterpretation of Zen. For Blofield, the realization of the nonduality of self and other results in a "total spontaneity to every situation," and he argues that both Buddhists and Taoists seek "an identical intuitive experience that would liberate them forever from the bonds of desire, passion and

ignorance and result in imperturbable and essentially joyous tranquillity" (Red Pine 1983, 4). He deals with Han-shan's failure to live up to this ideal by seeing him as a "pellucidly honest person," for whom "there must be times when memories of worldly joys, either experienced or once longed for, *temporarily* disturb his serenity" (Blofield's italics, Red Pine 1983, 5). Furthermore, his "occasional longings for lovely women, and for the fame, honor and material advantages enjoyed by successful scholars" are "due to the fact that his poems are not, as far as one can tell, arranged in chronological order" (Red Pine 1983, 5). While granting that Han-shan is human and not always perfect, enlightenment is still essentialized and idealized as an absolute experience beyond the world of passion, and Blofield assumes that if Han-shan's poems were in chronological order, we would see that his desires were eradicated at some point.

In his translation of Han-shan's complete works, Robert Henricks does not blatantly romanticize Zen or Han-shan, but he also holds to the dualistic view of a delusion-free enlightenment that he imposes on Han-shan in his translation, as examined in Chapter Four.

Burton Watson would like to present a more realistic view of Han-shan's life and religious practice: "Personally I prefer to read the poems as a chronicle of spiritual search — rewarded at times by moments of wonderful contentment, but at other times frustrated by loneliness and despair — rather than as a pat report of success" (Watson 1970, 14). In this view, however, Watson still maintains the conventional separation between enlightenment and desire and as such,

enlightenment is still defined in transcendent terms of contentment and freedom from sorrow.

In his dissertation, *The Transmission of Buddhism in the Poetry of Han Shan*, Stephen Ruppenthal explains that Han-shan's expressions of sadness can be consistent with Buddhism when they arise spontaneously, and he even refers to the idea that delusive passions are enlightenment. The problem is that Ruppenthal only does half of the equation. Delusive passions are turned into enlightenment, "as [passions] of themselves will vanish when *prajña*, or transcendental wisdom, is illuminated" (Ruppenthal 27), but there is no recognition that the very notion of "enlightenment" is delusive. Thus, although Ruppenthal claims to adhere to certain Buddhist expressions of nondual logic, his argument ends up negating conventional reality and affirming a separate, transcendental state, where the Buddhist attains "total equanimity," a "higher reality," and a "pure experience unmediated by the intellect" (Ruppenthal 3, 37, 58).

Interpretations of Ryōkan

Ryōkan's image is more complicated than that of Han-shan. Ryūichi Abé explains that in Japan, opinion on Ryōkan's significance is split into two opposing groups: the first sees Ryōkan as a Zen Master and the other as a Zen failure (Abé and Haskel 28). The first group considers Ryōkan as a "religious-cultural hero" and affirms his status as an enlightened master, who is praised for his disassociation from conventional Buddhist establishments. According to professor Hasegawa Yōzō, "It seems apparent to me that Ryōkan did actually

attain enlightenment in part proven by 'his genuine attainment of the *samadhi* of blissfulness' and taught Buddhism through his poetry and calligraphy" (quoted in Abé and Haskel 29). The opposing faction presents Ryōkan as a non-religious poet who failed to attain enlightenment and thus, pursued art instead. They view him through a Marxist lens in which Ryōkan is seen as sympathizing with the suffering of the common people (Abé and Haskel 30). Ryōkan's failure is exemplified by his expressions of loneliness, suffering, and poverty, which are uncharacteristic of the stereotypical enlightened Zen master. Kurita Isamu asks, "Can such a heart-devouring loneliness be called a state of enlightenment? . . . . What Ryōkan expresses in his poems are the ultimate states of the same agonizing solitude that we experience in our own everyday life" (quoted in Abé and Haskel 31). This second argument also presupposes a degree of incompatibility between Buddhism and literary pursuit since participation in artistic activity is seen to coincide with failure at Buddhist practice.[4]

Kodama and Yanagishima adopt the typical Zen master view of Ryōkan and consider many of Ryōkan's poems to be "expressive of his *satori* (spiritual awakening or enlightenment)" (Kodama and Yanagishima 43). They emphasize the legendary accounts of his innocent and genuine behavior and argue that "he could always keep himself standing above the phenomenal—that after all he had reached this stage must have been due to the genuine *satori* he had wisely

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[4] Scholars are also split on whether Kamo no Chōmei is a literary figure or Buddhist, and this division parallels the split between literary scholars, who supported a Shinto-Nationalist ideology, and Buddhist scholars in the Tokugawa and Meiji periods (Pandey 3-4).

acquired" (Kodama and Yanagishima 49). Kodama and Yanagishima explain that Ryōkan was somehow above the passions that he felt:

> It may as well be said that his mind had been so much refined and fortified as not to be subdued by the gaunt loneliness of his surroundings until at last he could sublimate himself and stand above the sentient love no matter how profoundly he was attracted by natural beauty or human ties. (Kodama and Yanagishima 12)

Although it is unclear what it means to "sublimate" oneself, it is obviously a transcendent ability allowing access to an ultimate state and is associated with the realization of the nonduality of subject and object through which Ryōkan "could sublimate himself into the transphenomenal region" (Kodama and Yanagishima 31).

John Stevens portrays Ryōkan as a genuinely enlightened Zen Master who exemplifies "the Zen Buddhist idea of attaining enlightenment and then returning to the world with 'a serene face and gentle words'" (Stevens 1977, 9). Stevens sticks to the legendary and over-simplified accounts of Ryōkan who always acted with perfect behavior: "Even as a child, he never told lies or argued with other boys" (Stevens 1993, 105). Stevens often conflates the legends of Ryōkan's compassion for others to a point of absurdity, as in this story:

> Ryōkan slept inside a mosquito net, not to protect himself but to protect the bugs—he feared he might accidentally kill them in his sleep. However, he left one leg outside the net so the insects would not go hungry. (Stevens 1993, 119)

Ryōkan certainly cared for insects, but stories like these deny Ryōkan any ordinary, self-interested concerns or feelings.

As Ryūchi Abé notes in the introduction to his and Peter Haskel's translations, many biographies and legends of Ryōkan's life give an "overly

idealized picture of the Master" (Abé xv) and Abé and Haskel aim to provide a more nuanced view of his character. Abé and Haskel in their translation wish to go beyond the typical image of Ryōkan often "presented in one-dimensional terms" and stress that Ryōkan is "above all a cultural hero" (Abé and Haskel 91). While rejecting the idealized Zen Master image, Abé is also critical of those who present Ryōkan primarily as a literary figure, and he criticizes Burton Watson for doing so (Abé and Haskel 27). Unlike the Japanese critics who have seen Ryōkan primarily as a poet, Abé rightly points out that Ryōkan did not give up on Buddhism; instead his Buddhist practice and his expression of sorrow continued simultaneously and reflect an "intertwining" of Ryōkan's poetic and religious life (Abé and Haskel 39). Abé's solution to Ryōkan's expressions of failure is to see sorrow as figurative and instrumental as a critique of Buddhist institutions and bureaucracy and also as a means to sympathize with and save others from suffering. But in doing so, Abé denies the literal interpretation of Ryōkan's poems and denies significance of sorrow to Ryōkan's own religious insight. Oddly enough, Abé sees Ryōkan as a cultural hero primarily for Marxist-like actions of challenging hierarchical authority and sympathizing with the suffering of the "underprivileged" (Abé and Haskel 58). While Ryōkan is critical of Buddhists of his day, Ryōkan does not express any particular allegiance to the underprivileged. The hardship of his own poverty may very well subtly critique Buddhists living in comfort, but he is more concerned with the selfish strivings of all individuals, not with a transformation of poverty and despair. Abé's arguments will be examined again in Chapter Four.

Yuasa Nobuyuki argues against Ryōkan's characterization as unusual and eccentric and instead emphasizes his realization of his ordinary nature and his expression of a "profound humanity" (Yuasa 21): "Ryōkan's greatness depends not so much on his unusualness as on his deep understanding of himself and of the world around him" (Yuasa 3). It is Ryōkan's expressions of ordinary humanity and emotion that I wish to explore and clarify in their connection with the ideals of Zen Buddhism.

Transcendence and Non-transcendence

There is an inherent problem with the notion of transcendence in Zen Buddhism. Zen is based on a philosophy of nonduality derived from Mahāyāna Buddhist thought in which the ultimate and conventional are identified. Thus, there can be no ultimate world, experience, or knowledge separate from the conventional world; there can be neither an ultimate state to transcend *to* nor a conventional world to transcend *from*. Furthermore, Zen is based in the Buddhist notion that there is no self: there is no independent, permanent self essence for any being or thing, or expressed in nondual terms: there is no fundamental difference between subject and object, self and other. Therefore, there is no independent self to transcend the world, and there is no world that exists apart from the self.

There is, on the other hand, transcendence of the duality between self and other and of the reification of independent, permanent self-essences. Since no self, impermanence, and nonduality characterize the conventional, immanent

world, this transcendence is best described as a non-transcendence, or "trans-descendence," to use the term of 20th C. Japanese philosopher, Nishitani Keiji (Nishitani 171). Instead of transcendence from the world, it is a transcendence that realizes the inherent nature of the world. Non-transcendence is a standpoint different from those of transcendence and immanence as it rejects both the ultimate state of transcendence and the reification of the immanent world as permanent and substantial.

Non-transcendence is found in the third stage of the three-part logic of nonduality that proceeds from: 1. duality, 2. to nonduality, 3. then to the nonduality of duality and nonduality, in which duality is reaffirmed (Hori 2000, 300-301). First, the ordinary world is accepted as substantial and both phenomenal objects and words are reified as independent entities. This is the stage of dualistic thought, pursuit of desire, and attachment to the immanent world. In the second stage, one rejects the dualistic nature of reality and subscribes to a nondual metaphysics. At this stage, one rejects language and pursues a transcendence and detachment from the illusory world. In the final stage, one realizes that this second stage is still stuck in the dualistic thinking of the first with only the polarity reversed in a mirror-like reflection of conventional thinking. At the second stage, there still remains attachment to the linguistic distinctions between conventional and ultimate, immanent and transcendent, linguistic and non-linguistic, duality and nonduality. At the third stage, the conventional and ultimate cannot be different. This is neither a transcendence from nor an attachment to the immanent world; it is a simultaneous

transcendence from the world and descendence to the world. One returns to the world and language but without the attachment to the duality of language that is found in the first two stages.

The importance of language in this logic is evident, and a non-transcendent view of "beyond words" will be explored in the discussion of poetry. We will also see how this dialectic can function in the process of reclusion.

Structure of the Thesis

This work will discuss the following problems in the context of Han-shan's and Ryōkan's poetry: 1. Poetry: the tension between poetry as a worldly activity involving dualistic language and the transcendence of words and social engagement, 2. Reclusion: the problem of worldly withdrawal creating an attachment to the solitude and purity of nature and thus, establishing a duality between nature and society, 3. Transcendence: the tension between the expression of ordinary emotion and the Buddhist ideal of enlightenment transcending passions and suffering.

Chapter Two will survey how the tension between poetry and Buddhist practice, in terms of both worldly involvement and use of language, has surfaced and has been dealt with in various contexts. This will not only provide insight into the possible relationships between poetry and Buddhism but will also provide hermeneutical tools for examining Han-shan's and Ryōkan's poetry; these include the functional model of language and a nondual interpretation of

symbolism. Han-shan's and Ryōkan's own poetic practices and views on literature and language will be examined. I will argue that poetry is a ground for non-transcendence and that Han-shan's and Ryōkan's poetry ultimately support a non-transcendent view of language, which is expressed in the logic and philosophy of their poetry itself and which is consistent with the logic of the Zen Buddhist tradition. Poetry is a ground for re-entering the world and re-emerging within the realm of duality without attachment to either worldly gain or other-worldly transcendence.

Chapter Three will discuss the duality between reclusion and public service, or nature and society in contrast to nondual philosophy. This chapter will survey the traditional modes of reclusion within Chinese and Japanese societies and identify Han-shan's and Ryōkan's place within them. We will see how reclusion itself is a social and political act and that the practice of reclusion for Han-shan and Ryōkan is a way to engage with and challenge the conventions of society. Furthermore, Han-shan and Ryōkan provide a nondual view of the purity of reclusion that is not fundamentally different from society.

In Chapter Four, I will analyze Han-shan's and Ryōkan's understanding of the ideals of Zen and show how their expressions of sorrow, suffering, and failure relate to this ideal. Their understanding of buddha-nature and enlightenment relies on a non-transcendent and nondual realization of their ordinary, human nature. I intend to show that their selflessness is realized in a non-transcendent behavior which is not attached to the notion of a separate self and which transcends selfish grasping for other-worldly transcendence. Using the functional

theory of language, I will illustrate how their expressions of failure to reach a non-attached ideal actualize the notion of no self.

Hermeneutical Problems

The mysterious nature of the poet Han-shan provides a number of interpretive difficulties as it is uncertain who he was, when he lived, and what religion he practiced. As the Preface by Lü-ch'iu Yin to his poems begins: "No one knows just what sort of man Han-shan was" (Snyder 1966, 32). After all, the name Han-shan itself literally means "Cold Mountain" and refers to the place where the author supposedly lived; this place is more certain than the author and person that Cold Mountain refers to. Conflicting evidence for the date of his poems suggests that they were probably written by more than one person. According to E.G. Pulleyblank, Han-shan's dates are traditionally said to be between the end of the 6th C. to the middle of the 9th; Burton Watson, Arthur Waley, and Iriya Yoshitaka put him in the late 8th to early 9th centuries (Pulleyblank 163). Pulleyblank has attempted to determine Han-shan's dates through evidence provided by the use of rhyming patterns in his poetry and has split the poems into those by Han-shan I (who is placed in the early T'ang dynasty) and Han-shan II (who is placed in the late T'ang dynasty) in order to "separate the work of the original poet from the later accretions" (Pulleyblank 165).

The uncertainty of Han-shan's identity problematizes the linguistic theory that this thesis partly relies upon, namely, the expressive-affective theory of

language, which is based on the ability to know the poet's heart/mind from his words. I have chosen to treat Han-shan's poems as expressions of a particular attitude and philosophical world-view that has remained popular in the Zen tradition. Besides, the name Han-shan or Cold Mountain is often considered by many translators to be primarily representative of a state of mind. At the same time, as Pulleyblank suggests by his intention to discover the original poet, there does seem to have been a single author responsible for much of the work, and these Han-shan I poems have been more attractive to translators. I concur with the impression of Burton Watson that although some of his poems were later additions, "a large part of them appears to be by one man, a gentleman farmer, troubled by poverty and family discord, who, after extensive wandering and perhaps a career as a minor official, retired to a place called Cold Mountain among the T'ien-t'ai range" (Watson 1962, 9). I have therefore noted where I have included poems attributed by Pulleyblank to Han-shan II.

There is also disagreement on Han-shan's religion, often considered to be either Taoist or Buddhist. Although most scholars highlight his affiliation with Zen, others see him as more of a Taoist, as does John Blofield, who writes: "To my mind, Cold Mountain owed more to Taoism than to Buddhism, so complete was his unconventionality and so profound his empathy with nature" (Red Pine 1983, 5). Fortunately, Robert Henricks has made a complete, annotated translation of Han-shan's poetry and has noted his references to Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. According to Henrick's findings and his own opinion, Han-shan's poems are primarily Buddhist in their themes, images, and

terminology and express a particular emphasis on Zen (Henricks 11). The fact that Han-shan's poems also contain Taoist and Confucian themes should not be surprising as Zen itself is a syncretic mix of Mahāyāna Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Ryōkan too, like any educated person in China or Japan, studied Confucian and Taoist texts and as well, incorporates themes from other Buddhist sects, especially the Pure Land school; nevertheless, he received his training in the Sōtō school of Zen. In the case of Han-shan, it is still difficult to prove that he is a Zen Buddhist, and as Nishitani Keiji has suggested, "If there is a touch of Zen in the genuine Hanshan, it is not because he was a follower of that movement" (quoted by T.H. Barrett in Hobson 136). There may be more evidence for Han-shan's affiliation with Zen than Nishitani acknowledges; nevertheless, I do not aim to establish Han-shan as distinctly a Zen Buddhist. Rather, I would like to again stress the fact that he was and remains influential to the Zen tradition and illustrates aspects of the Zen ideal for practitioners like Ryōkan, who expresses his indebtedness to Han-shan in his poetry, and the famous Zen Master Hakuin, who wrote a detailed commentary on Han-shan's poems.

Chapter Two

Poetry: The World and its Words

Introduction

The act of writing poetry poses a serious dilemma to Buddhist literati. First, writing poetry is an act of worldly involvement generally performed by members of the aristocracy. In Chinese and Japanese society the locus of poetic activity was the court; poetry was most often written by and for government officials or elite members of the political hierarchy. Poetry often contained a political message and also served as a political act in itself. The writing of poetry also involved the potential manifestation of worldly attachments that would considerably conflict with the Buddhist ideal of non-attachment. The pursuit of literary success, necessary for a Confucian official establishing himself in the political hierarchy, would encourage egotistical desires of worldly wealth and fame and attachment to the pleasures of literary life and practice. In addition, poetic themes often explore emotions usually seen to be delusive by Buddhism.

The second major problem with poetry is the use of language itself. This is especially problematic for the Zen sect, which emphasizes a direct experience through meditation that is "beyond words." The First Patriarch of Zen, Bodhidharma, laid down the foundations of Zen with a verse, claiming that Zen is "A separate transmission outside doctrine, Not founded on words or letters" (Hori 2003, 643). Since Zen is rooted in the Mahāyāna logic of nonduality and since language is based on dualities (i.e. the distinctions made with words),

language is thus seen as obscuring the nondual nature of reality. Therefore, Zen often prefers silence to speech and traces its lineage from the silent transmission from Śākyamuni Buddha to Mahākāśyapa; when Buddha raised a flower in front of his disciples, only Mahākāśyapa smiled and understood, the classic example of "mind-to-mind transmission" in Zen. The most striking example of linguistic inadequacy is the "thunderous silence" of Vimalakīrti. In the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, a number of bodhisattvas are asked to clarify the nature of nonduality and they each elaborate on an instance of nonduality. When Vimalakīrti is asked to give his explanation, however, he remains silent, and he is praised for his wise answer, which avoided the use of dualistic words as used by the previous commentators.[5] Besides the dualities inherent in words, language also presupposes a duality between subject and object, since linguistic statements are formed and determined from a subjective perspective in response to objective phenomena, a condition that hinders the realization of no self, the nonduality of subject and object, fundamental to Zen practice.

Poetry as a Practice and the Problem of Linguistic Inadequacy

Poets and Buddhists in China and later Japan were well aware of these linguistic issues, and some Buddhist-influenced poets decided that poetry and Buddhism were incompatible and gave up writing poetry — at least temporarily.

[5] It should be noted, however, that the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* itself should not be seen merely as an advocate of silence and linguistic inadequacy. In another chapter, when the dupe of the sūtra, Śāriputra, remains silent, he is chastised for being attached to silence and not having true insight.

Nevertheless, many Buddhists and Buddhist-influenced poets continued to pursue poetic activities, although this was done with hesitation and great effort was made to justify engagement in literary arts as a Buddhist.

At the forefront of the attempt to reconcile poetic and Buddhist practices was the T'ang poet, Po Chü-i (772-846), whose views on poetry laid the foundation for the justification of poetry as a Buddhist practice, although this was not his intention. Although there were other poets from within Buddhism who wrote religious poetry and other poets who made reference to Buddhism or were Buddhists themselves, Po Chü-i may be considered the first poet in the secular poetry tradition in China to write "true religious and devotional poetry" as a Buddhist (Watson 1988a, 1). Po Chü-i, like most poets of the T'ang, was active in the imperial government and wrote poems as a government official, most often as a means for political critique and social commentary. Since, in the T'ang, poetry was used to examine potential candidates for positions in the Confucian meritocracy, Po studied and wrote poetry in order to succeed in the Confucian examinations and establish himself in office. Privately, Po also studied Taoist Texts and Buddhist Sūtras (Waley 1949, 74); eventually, he became involved with China's "Southern School" of Ch'an Buddhism and was instructed by Wei-k'uan (755-817) a disciple of the famous Ch'an master Ma-tsu (d. 788) (Waley 1949, 99). Po practiced meditation, befriended monks, and visited Ch'an temples.

At least in his early years, Po idealized Zen as a way of transcending, conventional human emotions and the bonds of human relationships. Therefore, he was concerned with his attachment to words and poetry and viewed it as an

addiction similar to his love of wine. Later, Po managed to control his intake of wine: "But the Karma of Words still remains; he has not abandoned verse" (Waley 1949, 207). Elsewhere, Po describes "the devil of poetry" that disrupts the stillness of his mind. Po reflects his concern about literary attachment in a passage that became the centerpiece for the rationalization of poetic activity among Buddhists. Po sent a copy of his poems to be housed in a library of a Buddhist temple, but concerned about the appropriateness of his secular verses in a Buddhist collection, he wrote this note to accompany them:

> These worldly literary labors of my present existence, these transgressions of wild words and fancy phrases, may be transformed into causes that will bring praise to the Buddha's doctrine in age after age to come, into forces that will turn the Wheel of the Law. (Watson 1988b, 115)

Later, sending a copy of poems to another Buddhist library, he included "his constant prayer that in a future incarnation his poems might be 'reborn' as hymns of praise" (Waley 1949, 200).[6]

Although it is doubtful that Po would have intended to make such an impact, Po's statements on the relationship between poetry and Buddhism also became extremely influential in Japan as the Japanese sought a way to rationalize involvement in poetry within the context of Buddhist ideas. The Japanese did not have a literary tradition before the introduction of Buddhism; both Buddhism and a system of writing were imported simultaneously from China, and thus,

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[6] Po used the term *k'uang-yen iyu*, "wild words and fancy phrases," to apologize for his miscellaneous verse, which became more popular than his other works that he valued more. His political works did not need apology because of their conformity to Confucian values in which poetry functioned to establish morality and criticize social evils (Pandey 14-15; Waley 1949, 111-113).

Buddhist ideas immediately began to shape Japanese literary aesthetics (Pandey 1). The Japanese soon became self-conscious of the tension between literary activity as a "fundamentally worldly pursuit" and the "goals of detachment and renunciation" central to Buddhist practice; the debate itself became a "well-established literary trope" (Pandey 1, 3). Rajyashree Pandey argues that Po simultaneously expresses the conflict between Buddhism and literary practices and their potential reconciliation:

> His phrase *k'uangyen iyu* (wild words and fancy phrases), which was rendered as *kyōgen kigo* or *kyōgen kigyo* in Japanese, became a popular catchphrase in the Heian and Kamakura periods, encompassing both a censure of creative writing on religious grounds and, paradoxically, a justification of it that was also based on Buddhist doctrine. The phrase provided one way to articulate and resolve the tension between an engagement with "words" and a commitment to the ideals of Buddhism. (Pandey 9)[7]

Although "wild words" (*kyōgen*) and "fancy diction" (*kigo*) are two of the four Buddhist "Sins of the Mouth," along with "slander" and "hypocrisy," and refer to "non-religious poems" or "any literature that exists for the sake of art," these terms were also used to rationalize literary activity (Pollack 53). As suggested by the definition of *kyōgen kigo*, provided by Pollack, these terms did not criticize writing itself, only writing that was not Buddhist or written merely for the sake of eloquence and literary merit. Certainly room is made for the role of language in the Buddhist context and could be justified as skillful means, i.e. conventional means to teach the ultimate, the Dharma. Pandey notes that the *Lotus Sūtra*

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[7] Interestingly, the expression "wild words and fancy phrases" has now made it into Western literature. Gary Snyder, the American poet who studied Zen in Japan and translated Han-shan, cites Po's famous expression, concerning the transformation of his poems into Buddhist teachings, at the end of his epic work of Buddhist influenced poetry, *Mountains and Rivers Without End*, with the wish, "May it be so!"

condemns writings that go against Buddhist practice but "endorses writing that praises the Buddhist dharma" (Pandey 11). Thus, the writing of poetry could be validated if it functioned as a Buddhist teaching and did not indulge in literary extravagance.

The use of skillful means to teach the Dharma is supported in the Mahāyāna philosophy of Nāgārjuna, who argues and demonstrates that although no thesis or statement about ultimate reality can be established without leading to contradiction, nevertheless, the ultimate cannot be taught without relying on the conventional world:

> Without a foundation in the conventional truth,
> The significance of the ultimate cannot be taught. (Garfield 68)

Pandey notes that even the paradigmatic examples of linguistic inadequacy in the Buddhist tradition, Vimalakīrti 's "thunderous silence" and Śākyamuni's silent transmission to Mahākāśyapa are known and taught through language (Pandey 10). Po chü-i himself commented humorously on the paradox of linguistic inadequacy found in the *Tao Te Ching*, or *Lao Tzu* (often referred to as the "Five Thousand Words"), in his poem, "On Reading *Lao Tzu*":

> "One who speaks does not know: one who knows is silent":
> This remark I have heard from the Old Master.
> If you say the Old Master was one who knew,
> Wherefore did he himself write his "Five Thousand Words"?
> (Liu 1988, 7)

Nevertheless, the use of poetry could be justified as an expedient and conventional means to teach the Dharma. Po himself never makes the claim that his poems teach the ultimate, however, only his wish for them to do so.

In Japan, *Kyōgen kigo* was joined by other expressions such as: *shōji soku nehan* (samsara is nirvana), *bonnō soku bodai* (delusion itself is enlightenment), and *hōben* (expedient means) (Pandey 6, 38). Those who claimed that the conventional and the ultimate are identical accepted the idea that the use of words or language could not be avoided and that conventional language could be a means of serving the Dharma. Furthermore, if nirvana (the cessation of suffering) is identical with samsara (the world of cyclic existence marked by suffering) and enlightenment is no different from delusion, then engagement with language and worldly activities could not be separate from the ultimate and enlightenment. There is even the suggestion that there can be no distinction between secular and sacred writing. Because of the nonduality of sacred and secular, the Japanese poet Shunzei (1114-1204) argued: "Secular verse must be a Buddhist activity" (LaFleur 1983, 91). These arguments, however, do not clarify the function or significance of language and writing in Buddhism, nor do they clarify the nature or meaning of Buddhist practice. Any activity, including behavior usually considered to be unethical, could be defined as Buddhist in this manner, and this does not seem to be the conclusion that Buddhism wants to advocate or the point of Buddhist practice. Nevertheless, since the ultimate is not separate from conventional, secular activities, poetry could theoretically be a medium to realize the Dharma.

There is also the idea that poetry itself must be fundamentally empty and identical with Buddha and buddha-nature. According to Zen master Daitō (1282-1337): "Even in ordinary conversation . . . an awakened person speaks in the

voice of the Dharma" (Kraft 167). Even if the conceptual content or viewpoint of the speaker is dualistic, the nature of the words and language does not contain a permanent essence. The manifestation of emptiness through language is highlighted by Zen Master Dōgen (1200-1253).[8] This theme is mirrored by Dōgen's poem entitled, "No reliance on words or letters," a clear reference to Bodhidharma's verse:

> Not limited
> By language,
> It is ceaselessly expressed;
> So, too, the way of letters
> Can display but not exhaust it. (Heine 103)

Language is connected to impermanence as well. In one of Dōgen's poems he plays on the fact that the character for word in Japanese (*kotoba*) contains the character for leaf (*ba*), and suggests that his "petals of words" will blow away (Heine 107). The Japanese poets of the Gozan period also interchange the images of "crows" and "spattered ink" that turn into "lines of poetry" and blur the distinction between the 'real' object in nature and the 'imagined' object in poetry or painting (Pollack 87, 129); thus, poetry and literature are presented as natural activities.

Although outside the realm of poetry, chanting is another area of language that Buddhists promoted through ritual use. The Japanese advocate of Esoteric Buddhism, Kūkai (779-835), established a theory of language in which mantra, the empowered phrases repeated in chanting, would reveal all of

[8] Dōgen was an important influence on Ryōkan, not only as founder of Sōtō school in Japan, but also through his writings and collection of poetry (See Heine "Appendix C: Dōgen's influence on Ryōkan" 155-159).

language to be the speech of the Buddha. In Kūkai's theory, not only is all language a manifestation of the Dharmakāya, the absolute body of the Buddha that comprises the whole universe, but the entire universe itself is a sūtra that is continuously expounding the Dharma; every phenomenal object is a letter that reveals its own emptiness if read with true insight. Through the chanting of mantra, "the practitioners realize that they, too, are signs of scripture, which constitute the 'body of text'" (Abé 1999, 303). The distinguishing feature of mantra compared to ordinary language is its ability to both embody and point to the emptiness of all language; extending this theory to the realm of poetry, we could see that if poetry could effect an awareness of emptiness, it would have a role in Buddhist practice.

The view that poetry and language are also manifestations of emptiness provides a place for language that is often denied in Buddhist thought. However, it does not give any special significance to the practice of poetry itself or explain exactly how poetic practice can coincide with a philosophy of non-attachment and direct experience beyond words. A stronger rationale for the use of poetry as a Buddhist practice came about from the association of the traditional Japanese poetic form, *waka*, with the ideal of *michi* (from the character for *tao* in Chinese, which is also *dō* in Japanese, meaning "the way") developed in the 12th C (Pandey 37). *Michi* involves a single-minded dedication to any discipline and reflects the concentration demanded by Buddhist meditation practice. *Michi* is pursued in "the belief that total dedication to a particular pursuit would lead to the intuitive understanding of a universal truth" (Pandey 37). The ideal is based

on the premise that any object or activity is fundamentally empty and thus, identical with the ultimate nature of reality. Realizing emptiness in any activity or object is the realization of the emptiness of all objects and activities. All *michi*'s are valued equally, but to be defined as *michi*, they must involve a realization of emptiness: "Unless universal truth is ultimately attained through concentrated specialization in a given art, it is not a true *michi*" (Konishi 1985, 184).

Buddhist priests, like Mujū Ichien (1226-1312) defended *waka* as a religious practice and argued that instead of the attachments involved in conventional literary pursuit, Buddhist-inspired poetry could create an attitude of non-attachment to worldly objects and worldly activities (Pandey 45). Mujū suggests that the attention drawn to impermanence through the practice of writing or reading *waka* would weaken one's attachments to the phenomenal world and human ambition for wealth and fame. He distinguishes, however, between writing that falls under the category of *kyōgen kigo* and poetry that serves as a means to the comprehension of Buddhism and the act of non-attachment to worldly goals. Thus, *waka* could be a medium for the realization of the impermanence and emptiness of reality. Although the Japanese and Chinese traditionally turned their attention to the ever changing nature of things, from a Western perspective there does not appear to be an explicit or inevitable connection between poetry and impermanence.

The Buddhist aesthete-recluse Kamo no Chōmei (1153?-1216?) used the ideal of *suki*, "the single-minded pursuit of one artistic practice, a devotion to a *michi*" (Pandey 39) to link and reconcile the opposing notions of attachment and

detachment. "In Chōmei's writings, *suki* becomes the linchpin that holds together two potentially contradictory impulses, namely, the urge to write, which implies an engagement with and an attachment to the world, and the imperative to abandon literary endeavor and to attain detachment from the world" (Pandey 82). Attachment is central to the cultivation of poetry as a ground for single-minded devotion. Devotion in this sense involves a complete reversal of attachment. As Pandey explains, Chōmei sees the "unique place of *suki* in the attainment of enlightenment. It is striking that extreme attachment to the arts . . . is not viewed in those terms but is seen rather as a measure of otherworldliness. Attachment in such instances is turned on its head and redefined as total detachment" (Pandey 134).

The problem with Chōmei's ideal is its continual attachment to a transcendental, other-worldly state, described by Pandey as "the state of purity and detachment upon which Buddhist salvation is dependent" (Pandey 7). *Suki* contains a desire to separate oneself from worldly passions and ordinary life, and this separation suggests egotistical desire and the notion of an individual self. In Chōmei's ideal the ultimate and conventional, worldly and other-worldly remain fundamentally distinct. Even though attachment is included in the means, the ideal is still a total detachment independent from the world and still retains an attachment to non-attachment itself. However, at the end of his *Hōjōki*, Chōmei admits his failure to attain salvation and non-attachment, and this failure may imply "that aesthetic practices belong to the realm of deluded attachment and thus impede a true immersion in the way of the Buddha" (Pandey 171).

Nevertheless, Chōmei's failure to attain this ideal is more appropriate as an expression of selflessness, which is seen in his concession of his inability to transcend the world and represents his return to the world. This is a non-transcendent view which maintains that an ultimate cannot be attained (at least by Chōmei himself) outside of the conventional world, and it is a concession of continual attachments and delusion, not the justification of attachments as detachment. In any case, we are still left with the interpretation of language and literature as delusive attachment.

These justifications and rationales for poetry still do not say much about the significance of poetry itself. The nonduality of conventional and ultimate, delusion and enlightenment could be used to justify any practice and says nothing particular about poetry. In the same way, the ideals of *suki* or *michi* place emphasis on the importance of selfless devotion but a coherent reason for the primacy of poetry as the object of this dedication is barely developed. There are a couple of strong claims made for the uniqueness of poetry, but the logic behind those claims is not analyzed or explained. *Kyōgen kigo*, on the other hand, suggests a justification specified to literary practice itself as potential means for Buddhist teachings, but it does not imply any inherent qualities of poetry that would imply its effectiveness or importance in this role but rather maintains the notion of linguistic inadequacy. A step further can be taken to examine the views of linguistic adequacy underlying the practices of Chinese and Japanese poetics that may suggest grounds for the significance of poetry itself in Buddhist practice.

Models of Linguistic Adequacy

Poetry often takes a privileged place in the Buddhist tradition and East Asian culture in general; thus, one would expect an idea of linguistic adequacy underlying literary activities. In Zen, Bodhidharma's founding statement that Zen is "not dependent on words and letters" is itself expressed in verse. Often poetry is means to transmit, certify, or manifest the enlightened mind. According to Pollack, "Most early Zen masters believed that while no amount of talent for poetry would help make one a better Zen monk, advancement in Zen practice would reveal itself immediately in one's poetry. Thus developed the tradition of writing a poem to demonstrate one's enlightenment" (Pollack 12). In *The Sixth Patriarch Sūtra*, insight into the Dharma is tested and transmission is given through means of a poetry contest in which the illiterate Hui-neng becomes the Sixth Patriarch. This may not be "secular" poetry, but the lines between the two are certainly ambiguous, and Zen has paid great attention to secular poets such as the great Chinese writers of the T'ang dynasty. In the Zen kōan tradition, Zen monks are expected to use capping phrases, drawn from various sources including T'ang poetry and the classics of Chinese literature, to demonstrate and perhaps add further insight into their penetration of the kōan. While earlier poets in the Gozan period privileged Zen practice over poetry, poetry and Zen were even equated by Gozan period poet Kōzei Ryūha (1375-1446) who claimed: "There is no Zen outside of poetry, and no poetry outside of Zen" (Pollack 155-156). Of course, there was still criticism from Chinese and Japanese Zen masters, sometimes those who wrote poetry themselves like Musō Soseki (1275-1351)

and Dōgen, who discouraged Buddhist practitioners from literary pursuits that would distract from meditation practice and induce emotional attachment (Watson 1988b, 116; Heine 17).

The rationale for the use of poetry in Zen may be traced back to paradigms of linguistic adequacy that focus on the functional aspect of language. After all, language is rejected as inadequate primarily in terms of its descriptive qualities that set up false dualities between an object and its environment and impose conceptual content on the "thing itself." The primary source for a functional theory of language is the expressive-affective model found in the Great Preface of the *Book of Songs*, one of the Confucian classics, which claims that poetry reveals the intention of the heart or mind of the author. According to the Great Preface, "Poetry is . . . the manifestation of intent. In the heart it is intent; sent forth as speech it is poetry" (Saussy 77). This theory is elaborated into a series of movements from feeling to speech to music:

> Feeling is moved inwardly and takes form in speech. It is not enough to speak, so one sighs [the words]; it is not enough to sigh, so one draws them out and sings them; it is not enough to draw them out and sing them, so without one's willing it, one's hands dance and one's feet stamp. (Saussy 77)

There is a performative aspect involved here in which the author is not merely describing his heart/mind but presenting his heart/mind itself through words. These ideas led to a theory of reading in which one could trace back the words of the poet to the original feeling:

> In the case of composing literature, the emotions are stirred and the words come forth; but in the case of reading, one opens the literary text and enters the emotions [of the writer], goes up against the waves to find the source; and though it be [at first] hidden, it will certainly become

> manifest. None may see the actual faces of a faraway age, but by viewing their writing, one may immediately see their hearts/minds. (*Wen-hsin tiao-lung* trans. by Owen 59)

Thus, the project of reading for the Chinese was directed to the knowledge of the poet's genuine feelings and mind (Owen 62). Po Chü-i himself was inspired by this theory of reading:

> Word is the sprout from intent;
> Acts are writing's root;
> Thus as I read your poems,
> I know the man you are. (Owen 108)

The theory that poetry can reveal the mind of the poet underlies the use of poetry in Confucian official examinations (Owen 77) and, according to Hori, even the Zen idea of "mind-to-mind transmission," the wordless transmission advocated by Bodhidharma and illustrated by Mahākāśyapa (Hori 2003, 56-61).

Although the Japanese were not as concerned with the use of poetry to determine moral character, they were influenced by the theory of poetics developed in *The Book of Songs*, and they began to develop an expressive theory of poetics of their own (Ueda 2, 22). In the preface of the *Kokinshū* (or *Kokin Waka Shū*, 905 C.E.), the first collection of Japanese *waka* in Japanese script rather than Chinese characters, one of the compilers, Ki no Tsurayuki, wrote the following in his famous preface:

> The poetry of Japan has its seed in the human heart [*kokoro*] and flourishes in a myriad of leaves of words [*koto no ha*]. Human beings are creatures of many experiences, many deeds; it is in poetry that they give expression to the meditations of the heart in terms of what they see and hear. Hearing the warbler sing among the blossoms, or the frog in his fresh waters, is there any living being not given to song? (quoted in Pandey 24)

As Ueda notes, the two fundamental criteria established in Tsurayuki's preface are the "spontaneity of poetic expression and the genuineness of the poet's emotion" (Ueda 6). Therefore, assuming that the poem succeeds in presenting the sincere feelings of the poet, this is also a case where the reader should be able to know the poet through the poem.

There is one catch in the expressive-affective model of linguistic adequacy as developed in the Great Preface that could prevent a complete theory for the superiority of poetry as a medium of expression. This is the fact that music has been privileged as the expressive ideal and poetry is sometimes held to be subordinate because of the distortion created by the division between the word, its object, and its meaning.[9] Regardless of whether poetry or music is the ideal form of expression, poetry does not hold exclusive reign over the expressive arts. Nevertheless, Buddhists often preferred the medium of poetry; therefore, an additional step can be taken to account for the adequacy of poetry itself, and this adequacy must be found in poetry's unique qualities in terms of language and figurative techniques. It appears that, like the image of the pure lotus emerging from the filthy mud, poetry must be significant to Zen Buddhism *not in spite of* but *because of* the fact that it uses dualistic language that assumes a division of subject and object and contains metaphors and symbols that divide conventional and ultimate meaning. Because of these characteristics, poetry becomes a

[9] Saussy explains: "Music was, for the ancients, the model of adequacy and self-sufficiency in works of art, but it is in the nature of the linguistic sign not to be self-sufficient. The very fact that poems have a content separable . . . from their form calls into question the validity of the analogy with music" (Saussy 98). The priority of music was later turned over to poetry: "Therefore for pinpointing success and failure, for stimulating heaven and earth, for moving ghosts and spirits, nothing is equal to poetry" (*Great Preface* quoted by Saussy 78).

principal medium to express the nonduality of speech and silence, ultimate and conventional, self and no self, enlightenment and delusion, and even the nonduality of duality and nonduality. After all, as Paula Varsano comments, "The history of Chinese poetry is driven in part by the development of strategies to overcome the paradox of using words to convey the inexpressible" (Varsano 43).[10]

Poetry captures the rational language of prose along with the expressive emotion of music and is significant for both its descriptive and performative levels of meaning. What language describes and signifies literally can often exist in contradiction to the performative function of a statement's expression. A typical example for the performative theory of language is: Question: "What is the difference between ignorance and apathy?" Response: "I don't know and I don't care" (adapted from Hori 2000, 305). Taken literally, the response refuses to answer the question and provide a descriptive definition, but performatively, the answer itself is a concrete example of ignorance and apathy. This is the performative aspect of the functional theory of language, and its often paradoxical relationship with descriptive meaning will be shown to operate in Han-shan's and Ryōkan's poetry, particularly in their expressions of sorrow.

According to both Pauline Yu and Stephen Owen, central to the expressive-affective model is the interpretation of poetry as historical non-fiction. Yu explains that the reason for the non-fictive method of interpretation is the

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[10] In *Language Paradox Poetics*, James Liu traces the formation of Chinese poetics around an inherent paradox of language, woven through Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, in which words are used to claim the fundamental ineffability of reality (Liu 1988).

Chinese "non-dualist cosmology" (Yu 159). Metaphorical and symbolic interpretations are not suitable because they are "predicated on a fundamental ontological dualism" that separates the ultimate, transcendent realm from the conventional, historical world (Yu 5). In contrast with Eastern poetic modes, "Western allegory creates a hierarchical literary universe of two levels, each of which maintains its own coherence, but only one of which has ultimate primacy" (Yu 21). According to Yu, the expressive-affective model is contingent upon a "monistic view of the universe," which places emphasis and attention on the immanent world rather than a transcendent reality (Yu 32).

According to Owen, in contrast to the Western literary tradition, the Chinese generally assume that poetry is not metaphorical, and images are only interpreted metaphorically by the reader if the image has an established metaphorical meaning (Owen 57). After all, established metaphors are common in Zen writings, and Han-shan and Ryōkan use them extensively. Owen does recognize that metaphors do occur in Chinese poetry but claims that the metaphorical or symbolic meaning is not held to be superior to the conventional, literal meaning of the words and the concrete images of the poem (Owen 292-293).

While it is true that there can fundamentally be no hierarchy between conventional and ultimate meanings that are found in the metaphors and symbolism of Zen poetry, it does not follow that a distinction between conventional and ultimate meaning cannot be made. Symbols of emptiness and enlightenment (as well as many other themes) pervade Zen literature, including

the poems of Han-shan and Ryōkan. Presenting the division between conventional and ultimate meaning seems to be precisely the point of using an image such as "the moon" to represent "enlightenment." However, it is within this duality of conventional and ultimate that the strict distinction between them can be broken in order to realize that the moon does not exist apart from enlightenment and enlightenment does not exist apart from the moon. Or as the *Heart Sūtra* says, "Form itself is emptiness and emptiness itself is form" (Hori 2003, 660).

William LaFleur provides an alternate reading of symbolism in the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. He notes the contradiction that Mahāyāna Buddhism "pursued, on the one hand, the elaboration of an extensive system of Buddhist symbols, and, on the other, the subjection of the entire symbolization process to a radical critique that was itself grounded in Mahāyāna Buddhist thought" (LaFleur 1983, 20). LaFleur sees a process in the use of imagery and metaphor in language in which the reader is ultimately led back to the concrete and immanent from the abstract and symbolic — a process parallel to the Tendai Buddhist concept of *jukū-nyūke*, "leaving the empty and entering into the provisional" (LaFleur 1983, 96). LaFleur concludes: "Poetic depth involves more than the use of symbolism; it is not as much a move away from surfaces to seek inner essences and meanings as a move away from such inner 'meanings' to reaffirm the reality of the so-called surface" (LaFleur 1983, 96). LaFleur argues that the symbolic or metaphorical use of an image to point beyond itself does not require "negating the physical and phenomenal world;" instead the image "is

itself both the symbol and the symbolized" (LaFleur 1989, 203). Here we have a return from the ultimate back to the conventional at which point the ultimate and conventional are no longer fundamentally different.

The use of symbolism arises with the absence of religious terminology in Zen. Watson notes that one of the distinguishing characteristics of Zen as a form of Mahāyāna Buddhism is "the demand that the student view enlightenment and its implications in terms of his own immediate situation" (Watson 1988b, 106). Because of the emphasis on one's own immediate experience, the use of everyday language as well as secular imagery and verse forms are essential to the aesthetics of Zen poetry and often make it "indistinguishable from the secular poetry of the time" (Watson 1988b, 106). The primacy given to the use of everyday language and images also relates to Zen's general "avoidance of technical religious terminology" (Watson 1988b, 107). In this way, Zen poetry generally discards abstract, philosophical terms for the ultimate that could be interpreted as being independent from the phenomenal world and prefers to use concrete images that serve to unify the conventional and ultimate through metaphor. As we will see, however, this is not always the case with Han-shan and Ryōkan.

This view of symbolism allows for a non-transcendent reading of the metaphors and symbolism central to poetic discourse and is essential to a non-transcendent interpretation of symbolism contained in Han-shan's and Ryōkan's

poetry, particularly in Han-shan's use of symbolism for buddha-nature.[11] How Han-shan uses these symbols in a manner consistent with a non-transcendent, nondual philosophy will be explored in Chapter Four. Also in Chapter Four, the functional model for language will serve as a basis to illustrate how their poetry can express a non-attached and selfless attitude while describing failure. The next section will explore how Han-shan and Ryōkan express nonduality and a non-transcendent interpretation of "beyond words" through their engagement with poetry.

Han-shan's and Ryōkan's views of poetry and language

Ryōkan and Han-shan engage in poetry as a way to re-enter the world and address human society from the standpoint of reclusion. Ryōkan and Han-shan do not transcend participation in language or the conventional but delve into the dualities of language to create a poetry without attachment to either tradition (characterized by society and formal education) or individualism (characterized by direct experience, reclusion, and originality), even though their poetry is established within the tradition and fully expresses their individuality.

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[11] Although I have given attention to the functional model of language and a nondual use of symbolism, there are other figurative modes in operation in Han-shan's and Ryōkan's poetry. According to Yu and Owen, images in Chinese poetry, instead of pointing to a symbolic meaning, evoke a series of conventionally associated correspondences. While I claim that there can be symbolic content to an image, this symbolic content in the Buddhist context is generally found in terms of emptiness, and therefore, the ultimate meaning itself is open and ambiguous. We can see the potential for correspondences in a term like "Cold Mountain," which refers to a number of objects and ideas, while at the same time it has a particular symbolic meaning.

There is also the use of allegory used to make a discreet and indirect reference, traditionally useful for socio-political critique. We see this use of indirect language in Ryōkan's explanation of tears (Abé and Haskel 165) and Han-shan's allegory of the crane (Watson 1970, #83, 101); in both cases, the poets are discussing an expression of sorrow that they are unwilling to admit directly, and it is clear that the literal meaning of the poem is supposed to be fictitious.

Furthermore, their views of language coincide with both the theory of linguistic inadequacy and the functional model of language.

Han-shan

The legends surrounding Han-shan describe his life as completely carefree, and the ideal of non-attachment imbues his practice of writing poetry. Although Han-shan's poems do not directly confront the issue of attachment in the practice of writing poetry, the awareness of the potential dilemma presents itself in the legends of Han-shan that carefully emphasize his non-attachment to writing and any possible wealth or popularity associated with it. Han-shan was most likely unaware of the problem of poetry as outlined by Po Chü-i, since his poems were probably written before Po's and make no clear reference to the T'ang poets of his day. Nevertheless, Han-shan himself as well as his admirers developed a legendary account of his non-attached method of writing.

According to the Preface to Han-shan's poems, Han-shan left his poems scattered on cliffs, trees, and rocks. The author of the preface, Lü-ch'iu Yin— also an obscure figure — claims to have ordered the collection of these poems, which he then edited and published. Lü-ch'iu Yin ordered a group of monks "to hunt up poems written on bamboo, wood, stones, and cliffs—and also to collect those written on the walls of people's houses" (Snyder 1966, 34). This legend frees Han-shan of the responsibility for having collected and published his own work, which could implicate him in a quest for worldly renown. Also, his method of writing illustrates his non-attachment to his poems by leaving them in random

and uncertain places. Interestingly, Han-shan himself mentions his practice of writing poems on cliff walls:

> Once at Cold Mountain, troubles cease—
> No more tangled, hung-up mind.
> I idly scribble poems on the rock cliff,
> Taking whatever comes, like a drifting boat. (Snyder 1966, #19, 40)

The image of the rock cliff may be more suggestive of the life of reclusion and withdrawal from society and its ink and paper, than an indifference to the fate of his poems. However, Han-shan has an intentionless and effortless attitude toward writing, in which the words come and go "like a drifting boat," and he writes without thought of success or failure. Henricks translates the "cliff" in the poem above as "stone walls," perhaps implying a greater involvement with society; nevertheless, his translation of the final image as "I do not tether my boat" is a clear reference to being "unattached" (Henricks 256).

Despite the legends of scattering poems, Han-shan did not transcend involvement with society as his poems are directed to an audience and often contain direct statements to the reader in the form of challenge, invitation, criticism, or teaching. Han-shan appears to have been a failed Confucian scholar, which would account for his ability to write and his knowledge of the literary tradition. Thus, he must have known the use of brush and paper, and his poems are often social critiques in line with the Confucian poetic tradition. After all, officials were often Confucian in public and Buddhist/Taoist in private.

Since a couple of his poems mention receiving criticism of his poetry, some of his poems must have been read by others, and in his poetry, he engages in dialogue with other poets and scholars. The criticism he receives, however,

supports his image as an unconventional poet untainted by the ordinary pursuits of society. Han-shan often laments that people (even Buddhists) do not grasp the meaning of his non-traditional verses and ideas, and he finds himself misunderstood by the critic in the following poem:

> Some critic tried to put me down—
> "Your poems lack the Basic Truth of Tao"
> And I recall the old-timers
> Who were poor and didn't care
> I have to laugh at him,
> He misses the point entirely,
> Men like that
> Ought to stick to making money. (Snyder 1966, #20, 40)[12]

The second line is often translated as: "Your poems make no sense at all!" (Watson 1970, #73, 91), and the last lines of the poem have been interpreted as either a criticism from the voice of Han-shan, as above, or from the voice of the critic: "Money's the only urgent matter" (Henricks 262). In either case, the critic disapproves of Han-shan's devotion to the way of poverty and humility, and the poem plays on the distinction between the profit-oriented writing of society and Han-shan's reclusive style.

Han-shan is well-known for distancing himself from conventional poetic form by using language that is described as "simple, often colloquial or even slangy" (Watson 1970, 11). Han-shan himself comments on criticism he has received for breaking traditional rules of poetry:

> A certain scholar named Mr. Wang
> Was laughing at my poems for being so clumsy.
> "Don't you know you can't have two accents here?
> And this line has too many beats.
> You don't seem to understand meter at all
> But toss in any word that comes to mind!"

---

[12] Henricks notes this poem is Han-shan II.

I laugh too, Mr. Wang, when *you* make a poem,
Like a blind man trying to sing of the sun. (Watson 1970, #28, 46)

As noted by Henricks, this poem deliberately contains two errors in terms of standard rhyming patterns (Henricks 386). Han-shan chooses not to follow the conventions as the primary function of the poem is to transmit direct experience rather than strictly adhere to official standards and techniques. He is not trying to get ahead in the literary world by conforming to the tradition; instead, his concern is with poetry based on direct insight, often related to the Buddhist Dharma, as in 'seeing the sun,' where the sun can function as a symbol for enlightenment.

Behind his unconventional techniques, however, is a well-grounded knowledge of the literary tradition. Henricks comments that for scholars of Han-shan "too much has been made of his use of the colloquial: many — I would say most — of his poems are written in good, classical Chinese" (Henricks 12). Han-shan is not as distanced from the literary tradition as it may first appear. He was well acquainted with Confucian and Taoist texts, Buddhist Sūtras, and the Classics of History and makes reference to them in his poems. The "Nineteen Old Poems," a collection of anonymous poems from around the second century C.E. that stress the inevitability of death, and the work of T'ao Ch'ien (T'ao Yüan-ming; 365-427 C.E.), the primary founder of the reclusive poetry genre, also considerably shape Han-shan's literary efforts. Although Han-shan's popularity is based on his thematic variety and creative imagery, he addresses many conventional themes, such as impermanence, and provides moral criticism and commentaries on the life of officials.

At least in his early years, Han-shan did not reject conventional literary pursuit and had a great fondness for reading. While describing his reclusive lifestyle in the countryside with his wife, in the time before he ventured to Cold Mountain, he writes: "And in my house what do I have? / Only a bed piled high with books" (Watson 1970, #2, 20). In the next poem, we see that even as Han-shan's life was transformed from a scholar-farmer to a mountain recluse, he continued to enjoy reading books:

> I took along books when I hoed the fields,
> In my youth, when I lived with my older brother.
> Then people began to talk;
> Even my wife turned against me.
> Now I've broken my ties with the world of red dust;
> I spend my time wandering and read all I want.
> Who will lend a dipper of water
> To save a fish in a carriage rut? (Watson 1970, #32, 50)

At the same time of his indulgence in scholarship, Han-shan never ceases to make light of and criticize the significance of books, learning, and general engagement with words. While reading Taoist texts, he writes:

> While I, with a book or two of the immortals,
> Read under the trees — mumble, mumble. (Watson 1970, #72, 90)

Although absorbed in reading, he belittles the ultimate importance of the words and presents them as insubstantial gibberish. In one poem Han-shan claims that poetry is the only joy for "a bunch of poor scholars" who are starving and unemployed (whether Han-shan includes himself in the group or not depends on the opinion of the translator) (Watson 1970, #10, 28). But he suggests that these poems are worthless and no one will read them: "We could inscribe our poems on biscuits/ And the homeless dogs wouldn't deign to nibble" (Watson 1970, #10,

28). The poem gains deeper meaning from the added critique of the "dogs," officials who refuse to appreciate the work and advice of scholars, and thus, words could be meaningful if only understood by those in power (Kahn 25).

Besides these musings on the significance of reading, Han-shan makes stronger arguments for linguistic inadequacy and the inexpressibility of reality. In terms of Buddha-nature, or "the Way" he applies the standard Zen and Taoist positions to assert: "There's no word to describe it; moreover, there's neither sentence nor phrase" (Henricks 253), similar to Bodhidharma's claim that Zen is "not founded on words and letters." In many instances Han-shan is advocating the typical Zen preference for direct experience over language. He compares the inability for words to cure hunger with their inability to provide knowledge of buddha-nature, which is not found in words but in one's own mind: "You just speak of the difficulties in looking for the Buddha./ Turn your mind 'round—*that's* the Buddha!" (Henricks 296).

Han-shan goes further to comment on the defiling nature of words and how his reclusive lifestyle is necessary to cleanse him of his earlier education. He contrasts his previous involvement in the dust and illusion of society, in which he studied and wrote Confucian poetry, with his current life of reclusion:

> In my first thirty years of life
> I roamed hundreds and thousands of miles.
> Walked by rivers through deep green grass
> Entered cities of boiling red dust.
> Tried drugs, but couldn't make Immortal;
> Read books and wrote poems on history.
> Today I'm back at Cold Mountain:
> I'll sleep by the creek and purify my ears. (Snyder 1966, #12, 38)

Watson translates the last line as "To pillow my head on the stream and wash my ears" (Watson 1970, #38, 56), and it contains a reference to the traditional story of the recluse Hsü Yu. When asked by legendary Emperor Yao to succeed him as ruler, Hsü Yu washed his ears out in a stream as he considered the suggestion of worldly power to pollute his moral integrity (Watson 1970, #38, 56; Henricks 400). Han-shan, however, is not rinsing his ears of an inappropriate comment or suggestion but rather all of history and learning. Snyder's translation implies that merely listening to the stream cleans his ears; instead of the water as cleansing-agent, the impermanent nature of the stream and the non-intellectual activity of listening clear his ears and his mind. The stream still carries the notions of impermanence and direct experience; nevertheless, Watson is more accurate in translating the line in relation to the literary reference.

Han-shan often comments that his words are not effective in transmitting his message to his reader or society:

When men see Han-shan
They all say he's crazy
And not much to look at —
Dressed in rags and hides.
They don't get what I say
& I don't talk their language.
All I can say to those I meet:
"Try and make it to Cold Mountain." (Snyder 1966, #24, 41)[13]

Han-shan and the people of ordinary society misunderstand each other because they do not use the same type of language, and from the perspective of society, Han-shan has some outrageous ideas. In Snyder's translation, he claims to be

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[13] Alternate translation of lines 5 and 6: "The things we say he doesn't understand/ The things he says we wouldn't utter!" (Watson 1970, 75).

using an unconventional language that can only be understood if one has the same experience and attains his mind. This is a plausible interpretation since in this poem, Han-shan gives up on explanation, and instead his language functions as a direct challenge to the reader to make it to "Cold Mountain" that is symbolic of both the religious path and an enlightened state of mind.[14]

Even trying to communicate this state of mind to his reader through traditional images fails:

> My mind is like the autumn moon
> Shining clean and clear in the green pool.
> No, that's not a good comparison.
> Tell me, how shall I explain? (Watson 1970, #97, 115)[15]

Here, Han-shan's question prevents the reader from relying on Han-shan's own explanation and images. Contrary to the typical presentation of the symbol of the moon, which Han-shan himself uses over and over again, he surprisingly admits that the symbol is insufficient and demands the reader to provide an explanation in his or her own words.

Alongside Han-shan's views on the inadequacy of language, he attempts to express his mental attitude in words. A poem attributed to Han-shan II contains a statement, which suggests the genuine feelings behind his poetry and mirrors the expressive-affective theory of language: "If the heart is sincere, the words set forth are direct;/ With a direct heart, there is no behind" (Henricks

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[14] Waley, Watson, and Henricks all translate the last line in a manner consistent with its interpretation as a direct challenge or invitation, even though Waley translates it as a question rather than an imperative statement (Waley 1954, 16; Watson 1970, 75; Henricks 305).

[15] An alternate translation for the third line; "There is nothing with which it compares" (Henricks 95).

326). In his other poems as well, Han-shan wishes to convey his mind to his readers.

> Some people laugh at my poems;
> But my poems stand side by side with
> the elegant and refined.
>
> Still I've not troubled Mr. Cheng to add notes,
> And what use having Master Mao explain?
>
> I don't regret that those who understand them are few;
> It's just that those who know inner thoughts are quite rare.
>
> If you chase and pursue C and D,[16]
> With my faults, you'll never come to the end!
>
> But should my poems suddenly meet up with someone
> with a sharp eye
> Then they'll naturally circulate throughout the world. (Henricks 404)

Han-shan's direct speech does not require the analytical commentaries like those of Mao and Cheng on the *Book of Songs*, but understanding them requires "those who know inner thoughts," or in other words, someone who understands the mind and heart of the poet. Thus, Han-shan intends to reveal his mind to those who can understand as in the Zen model of mind-to-mind transmission.

Despite the preference for direct experience over words, Han-shan's poems are still meant to serve as Buddhist teachings. His poems frequently contain Buddhist based teaching or criticism and can be quite didactic in style. He claims that his words are like bitter medicine that "no one will believe" (Watson 1970, #99, 117) suggesting that they are designed to help or cure people even though people are unwilling to accept them. In contrast to Po Chü-i who

[16] "C and D (*kung-shang*) are the first two musical tones in the Chinese pentatonic scale. Here they seem to stand for the tone categories used in regulated verse" (Henricks 405).

hoped his poems would be transformed into Buddhist teachings, Han-shan, rather arrogantly, proclaims his poetry to be superior to the sūtras:

> Do you have the poems of Han-shan in your house?
> They're better for you than sūtra-reading!
> Write them out and paste them on a screen
> Where you can glance them over from time to time. (Watson 1970, #100, 118)

Poetry is the way through which Han-shan engages with the world, humans, and society. It is through poetry that we can read the poet and know of his non-attachment, reclusive lifestyle, and critiques of the dust of human ambition. Although Han-shan places emphasis on direct experience and belittles the significance of language, it is through language that Han-shan attempts to challenge his readers and transmit direct insight. It is only through language that we are made aware of the insufficiency of intellectual understanding and pursuit.

Ryōkan

Ryōkan, like Han-shan, is known for leaving his poems in a variety of locations without keeping a single compilation of them. Since Ryōkan lived only a couple of centuries ago, much more is known about his life, and interestingly, his habit of scattering poems appears to be historically accurate. There is no mention of Ryōkan leaving his poems on cliff walls, stones, or trees, however. Rather, his poems were either written for his own pleasure or distributed to his friends with letters and pictures or on fans and other objects — a practice that reflects his involved, social behavior. He did not publish or create any collection of poems himself (except for a small selection of Chinese poems), and it was

Teishin, a nun who developed an intimate relationship with Ryōkan at the end of his life, who made the first collection of his poems (Watson 1977, 6).

For Ryōkan, poetry is connected to withdrawal from society and also the practice of Zen. Like Mujū Ichien, Ryōkan engages with poetry to loosen his ties with the pursuit of wealth, fame, and other personal desires as well as draw attention to the impermanent and selfless nature of all things. As he says: "mine is a life of poetry/ with worldly cares all left behind" (Abé and Haskel 112). Ryōkan relates the withdrawing practice of poetry to the Zen mind when discussing his life of reclusion:

> In the house, what does one find?
> Books of poetry and prose covering the floor
> By nature I shun the clamor of the world
> When I come here to visit, I like to stay
> The mind of poetry, the mind of Zen
> Come together effortlessly (from Abé and Haskel 110)

Reading and writing for Ryōkan is not associated with attachment to language and worldly desires but instead, poetry is explicitly equated to the non-attachment of Zen with a more evident rationale than many who have made the link before: literary practice and enjoyment draws him away from self-interested pursuits.

Despite his intention to withdraw from the world, Ryōkan did become quiet well-known for his poetry and even more well-known for his calligraphy. In the following poem, he is humorously annoyed at the popularity of his poetry:

> I shaved my head, became a monk,
> plowed through the weeds, spent years looking for the Way.
> Yet now wherever I go they hand me paper and brush,
> and all they say is "Write us a *waka*!" "Write us a Chinese poem!"
> (Watson 1977, 111)

Ryōkan never appears to have intended to get ahead in the literary world, however, and adhered to a humble lifestyle and simple mode of writing.

Ryōkan is not concerned with the use of elegant words and phrases, and his poems present their message simply and directly without the interference of abstract and obscure literary references. Although literary allusion and play are abundant in Ryōkan's poetry, the imagery and meaning of the poem, at least on the surface, are presented clearly and immediately to the reader without a demand to analyze the poem intellectually, and the content of his poems generally concern his everyday, ordinary experiences, which are readily accessible to the reader. In fact, the depth of Ryōkan's poetry often appears in the deceptively simple images and statements on the surface of his poems that Ryōkan provides without an explicit, logical connection or explanation.

Ryōkan consciously kept his poems accessible and avoided artificial and pretentious figures of speech. A friend of Ryōkan's, Suzuki Bundai, wrote that Ryōkan detested three things: "professional calligrapher's calligraphy; professional poets' poems; and professional cooks' food" (Abé and Haskel 24-25). On his list of things to avoid, he includes "fancy words" and "sugary speech" (Stevens 1993, 147). Writing appears to be a completely natural, effortless process for him. After describing a natural, lazy summer scene, Ryōkan comments: "I take a few phrases/ and they just turn into poems" (Abé and Haskel 107).

Ryōkan was not intent on following the customs of refined poetry and thus, like Han-shan, often created an unconventional poetry that broke the

traditional rules of rhyme and meter and made "frequent use of colloquialism and humble images" (Yuasa 3). His friend Suzuki Bundai adds: "Metrical rules are what my teacher disliked most" (Yuasa 17). Like Han-shan and in line with the expressive theory of Ki no Tsurayuki, Ryōkan preferred the sincerity of expression over inordinate attention to eloquent language and literary technique. One anecdote contained in a biography compiled by Ōzeki Bunchū particularly captures Ryōkan's rationale for by-passing traditional rules: "Someone criticized the Zen Master's poems for transgressing many phonetic regulations. The Master said, 'I simply speak what my mind desires to express. How can I be bothered by phonetic rules? If there are those who care about poetics, they should feel free to go ahead and make the corrections'" (Abé and Haskel 79). Similar to Han-shan's response to a critic who writes poetry like a blind man singing about the sun, Ryōkan criticizes those who are attached to the refinement of words and fail to express genuine feelings or thoughts.

> How pitiful, those virtuous fellows!
> Moving into the recesses, they immerse
>   themselves in composing poetry
> For Ancient Style, their models
>   are the poems of Han and Wei
> For Recent Form,
>   the T'ang poets are their guide
> With gaudy words their lines are formed
> And further adorned by
>   novel and curious phrases
> Yet if they fail to express
>   what's in their own minds
> What's the use, no matter
>   how many poems they compose! (Abé and Haskel 26).

Watson translates "what's in their own minds" as "things in the heart" (Watson 1977, 101), reflecting the double meaning of the Chinese character for

heart/mind. Thus, the expression of one's genuine state of mind and thoughts are included alongside sincere emotion. For Ryōkan, it is the transmission of this true mind of the poet rather than the "wild words and fancy phrases" that is the essential function of poetry.

In a poem to Teishin he expresses a view that corresponds to the expressive-affective model of language by equating words with genuine emotion:

> Not for a moment
> Must you think our voices die
> Leaving no traces;
> Truly more than what they are,
> Words are equal to our hearts. (Yuasa 176)

Thus, Ryōkan wrote from the perspective that words could transmit the heart and mind of the poet and it was the poem's function to do so.

Ryōkan's most radical statement on the unconventional nature of his poetry and his disregard for literary artifice occurs in the following poem:

> Who says that my poems are poems?
> My poems aren't poems at all
> When you understand
> That my poems really aren't poems
> Then we can talk poetry together (Abé and Haskel 23, 108)

Abé interprets this poem as a reply to criticism of his habit of breaking the rules of Chinese verse (Abé and Haskel 26), and Yuasa confirms this interpretation in his translation, which includes the line: "my poetry is unworthy of its name" (Yuasa #79, 64). A nondual view of poetry and the logic of the *Diamond Sūtra* (A is not A, therefore A) also lurk behind Ryōkan's words. The first part of the *Diamond Sūtra*'s equation is explicit: "my poems are not poems." This is not a rejection of poetry, however, but a prerequisite standpoint to understanding the

nature of poems — an understanding necessary to be able to truly discuss poetry with Ryōkan; thus, the poem completes the logic: poetry is poetry again. In either interpretation of the poem, it is evident that Ryōkan privileges an understanding and expression beyond the fancy words and formalities of literature and beyond any fixed view of the structure and significance of poetry.

Despite his apparently direct and often unconventional style, it would be a mistake to think that Ryōkan did not employ traditional forms and did not draw upon the literary tradition in a sophisticated manner. Ryōkan wrote poems in both Chinese and Japanese and was well-acquainted with Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist texts and classical Chinese and Japanese poetry, from which he subtly and skillfully wove references into his poems. Anecdotes and poems about Ryōkan's childhood suggest that he was seemingly obsessed with books and would stay up all night reading. He paid special attention to the *Man'yōshū*, the classical 8th century anthology of Japanese poetry, whose "crude but direct style" he imitated (Abé and Haskel 25).

Han-shan (or Kanzan in Japanese) was more of an influence on Ryōkan than any other individual poet, as is attested by the number of allusions to his poems (see Yuasa 18). He occasionally writes about reciting Han-shan's poems in his hut and made this verse in imitation of Han-shan's own self-praise:

> The volume of Kanzan's poetry in my house, I esteem more
> Than the sacred sūtras or countless commentaries on them.
> A brush in hand, I have made copies on my bedside screen,
> And now and then, I brood on them, feasting on each poem. (Yuasa #186, 98)

William LaFleur draws attention to the symbolism and play of language found in Ryōkan's poems and argues that the simplicity of Ryōkan's verse consists of his effortless use of literary techniques and allusions that prove Ryōkan's mastery and skill of language, rather than an untrained lack of sophistication (LaFleur 1980, 124-125). Ryōkan is a prime example of the East Asian ideal of *wu wei*, non-action, i.e. selfless, spontaneous, and non-intentional action that is nevertheless attained through practice and cultivation. In this way, he conforms to the ideal of this unknown Taoist Master: "In the highest craftsmanship there is no craftsmanship; the finest poetry is where there is no Poetry" (Owen 51).

Ryōkan also supports the theory of linguistic inadequacy and frequently warns us not to get caught up in words and dualistic ideas like delusion and enlightenment, right and wrong, true and false. The Buddha, or buddha-nature itself, is merely a linguistic conception, "something made up in the mind" (Watson 1977, 102) that one should not attach to without real understanding. Penetration into the Dharma itself does not depend on the intellectual teachings of Buddhism, and the words of these teachings can be a hindrance to direct insight:

> If we really knew ourselves
> We would not have to rely on old teachers.
> The wise go right to the core
> And leap beyond appearances;
> The foolish cleave to details
> And get ensnared by words and letters. (from Stevens 2004, 80)

Ryōkan often gives a question and then answers it in a non-rational way by using expressions of silence or action that are typical of Zen. When he is

asked why he spends his time playing with children, he refuses to provide an intellectual explanation:

> We hit it going, hit it coming,
> never knowing how the hours fly.
> Passers-by turn, look at me and laugh,
> "What makes you act like this?"
> I duck my head, don't answer them—
> I could speak but what's the use?
> You want to know what's in my heart?
> From the beginning, just this! just this! (from Watson 1977, 74)[17]

We see the performative function of language in the last words: "just this! just this!" These exclamatory statements do not describe or justify the reasons for Ryōkan's behavior or feelings; rather, they both draw attention to and express the immediate present through language. Interestingly, Ryōkan does not deny the possibility of explanation but questions its utility, and even though he rejects the imperative to "speak" in terms of logical argument, he still continues to employ language to convey his meaning.

Often these poems point to a silence on Ryōkan's part, although this silence is still known and presented through language.

> Those old days—I wonder,
> did I dream them
> or were they real?
> In the night I listen
> to the autumn rain (Watson 1977, 62)

Ryōkan does not analyze the relationship between dreams and reality or comment on their identity or difference but simply offers a natural scene of phenomenal

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[17] Even if I were able to say something
how could I explain?
Do you really want to know the meaning of it all?
This is it! This is it! (from Abé and Haskel 132)

existence that expresses the answer through both the sound of rain and Ryōkan's silence. In another poem, his response to questions about the nature of enlightenment and delusion is to "stretch both feet in answer" (Stevens 1977, 26).

Following Han-shan, Ryōkan makes reference to the recluse Hsü Yu but in doing so, considers a very different standpoint on language. He writes: "To hear the words of truth, you must wash your ears clean" and explains the meaning: "It means to rid yourself of all you have heard beforehand" (Yuasa #101, 71). Without doing this, Ryōkan warns we will fail to recognize the truth and will be deceived by falsehood. Again, there is a warning against learning and language and the recognition of the stream as purifying the mind of defiling words. However, for Ryōkan, this is not done to transcend language but to be able to hear words clearly and accurately without being deceived. It is a purification in order to comprehend the nature of words and enter the realm of language instead of white-washing the mind of all conceptual activity and abandoning words.

Many of his comments on direct experience and linguistic inadequacy contain a subtle play on words that carefully points to the interrelationship between insight and language. As he does in his disregard for the importance of literary style, Ryōkan emphasizes the importance of direct experience over words and books. Here is one poem that undermines the ultimate value of reading while simultaneously advocating the value of words that are directed toward immediate, non-intellectual knowledge:

> Even if you've read through countless books
> You're better off sticking to a single phrase

If anyone asks which one, tell him:
"Know your own mind just as it is" (Abé and Haskel 153)

This poem creatively uses language both to question the value of words and to point to the mind, and as always Ryōkan focuses on the transmission of mind rather than conceptual understanding. Another poem develops a skillful play between words and phenomenal experience and uses a possible allusion to the silent transmission of Buddha to Mahākāśyapa by holding up a flower:

My words cannot hope to match
The Buddha's exquisite teaching
My sermon:
This gardenia from the mountains (Abé and Haskel 205)

At first, Ryōkan seems to compare his own words to the written teachings of the Buddha, but in the next line, he transforms his own words and "sermon" into a presentation of phenomenal experience, and Buddha's teaching is no longer linguistic or intellectual in content but rather the very nature of ordinary phenomena. Ryōkan's words function to draw attention to ordinary objects rather than provide an intellectual explanation of reality. The force of the poem, however, is not so much the emphasis on an experience "beyond words" but the interplay between the words of his "sermon" and their transformation into phenomenal experience; thus, Ryōkan is playing on the interdependence of the conventional (words) and the ultimate (experience beyond words). While Ryōkan begins with position of linguistic inadequacy, his "sermon" is still effective through language.

Ryōkan's primary intent in his poetry is to present direct insight of the Dharma or advocate Buddhist teachings. In this way, his poems can be

considered as conventional means to point to the ultimate, like a finger pointing to the moon. However, Ryōkan advises against making a fundamental distinction between conventional and ultimate:

> Because of the finger
>   you can point to the moon
> Because of the moon
>   you can understand the finger
> The moon and the finger
> Are neither different nor the same
> This parable is used only to lead students to enlightenment
> Once you've really seen things as they are
> There's no more moon, no more finger (Abé and Haskel 152)

Like Nāgārjuna, Ryōkan argues that the distinction between conventional and ultimate is necessary but not a true reflection of reality. According to the parable of the finger and the moon, the conventional (the finger) should be abandoned once the ultimate (the moon) has been seen. Ryōkan takes a step beyond this and says even the truth of this parable (the distinction between conventional and ultimate) must be ultimately discarded, and he illustrates the interdependent and empty nature of both the moon and finger, the ultimate and conventional.

Ultimate meaning and understanding, on both a literary and religious level, is not transcendent from conventional language, imagery, and phenomena. In the first level of understanding, linguistic understanding (the conventional) is abandoned once the ultimate (non-linguistic) understanding is reached. At this stage, language is not truly transcended since there is still attachment to the linguistic distinction between linguistic and non-linguistic. On the next level of understanding, the distinction between the linguistic and non-linguistic is discarded; thus, the abandonment of language must also be refuted, and language

returns. In this last stage, the transcendence of the language based distinction between language and beyond words simultaneously allows for the re-emergence of language. Paradoxically, this is a simultaneous transcendence from and descendence to language. It is a transcendence of the dualistic idea of transcendence and thus, places the poet back in the world.

Conclusion

Consistent with the model of non-transcendence, Ryōkan's and Han-shan's poetic practices are neither a transcendence from nor an attachment to society, language, and literature. Both Ryōkan and Han-shan maintain an image of non-attachment from the selfish pursuits of wealth and fame and a non-attachment to the ultimate significance of words and books, while they pursue literary arts and use their poetry to engage with society. Their occasional use of nontraditional poetic form is a sign of non-attachment to success in the literary world and devotion to the direct expression of insight over strict adherence to literary convention. At the same time, Han-shan and Ryōkan are not radical individualists who have transcended or ignored the tradition, but skillfully engage with the tradition and employ their training in the classics with mastery and selfless ease. Ryōkan and Han-shan also toss Mahāhāyana and Zen terms into their poetry in order to place these allusive concepts into concrete and personal situations as well as to dismiss the dualistic notions behind them. "Beyond words" then does not refer to the abandonment of language or transcendence to a

non-conceptual pure state of consciousness but an active participation in the realm of language without reification of linguistic dualities.

Although Han-shan and Ryōkan seek to remove themselves from worldly pursuits, for neither author is poetry a way to distance themselves from society and the conventional world. They choose the path of poetry not to forget about phenomenal experience as in Chōmei's ideal but to engage in literary practice in order to encourage a reclusive lifestyle that leaves worldly, individual gain behind. The nature of their reclusion and its relationship to social engagement will be the issue for the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Eremitism and Society: White Clouds and Red Dust

Introduction

Han-shan and Ryōkan are typically seen as recluses that never troubled or criticized anyone but kept to themselves and remained uninvolved in social affairs. John Blofield presents a typical image of Han-shan as an enlightened hermit beyond the dust of society, who did not "go around telling [people] how wrong they were, how right his own beliefs and actions. He never interfered with people . . . . Nor did he get angry, indignant, disgusted or shocked . . . ." (Red Pine 1983, 13). However, in his poetry, Han-shan is often quite critical and didactic and strongly asserts his view of the way things are. He is evidently more involved in society than his stereotypic image would suggest, as Blofield himself implies: "If he were really a solitary forest dweller, where did he store the paper, ink and brushes needed for writing poems?" (Red Pine 1983, 10).

John Stevens adheres to a similar passive image of Ryōkan, who "never preached or exhorted" (Stevens 1977, 12), and instead of admitting Ryōkan could be critical of others, Stevens writes that he "gently chided fellow Buddhists" (Stevens 1993, 129). Ryūchi Abé more appropriately labels Ryōkan's complaints as "sharp criticism" (Abé and Haskel 49). According to Abé, Ryōkan's eremitic lifestyle and begging practice were designed to critique conventional Buddhist monastic practice and institutions and served as "an effective antidote for the problems resulting from the excessive bureaucratization of the Zen temples"

(Abé and Haskel 52-53). Stevens, on the other hand, sees Ryōkan's lifestyle, not as a critique of bureaucracy, but as exemplary of the Zen ideal of one who has "returned to the marketplace with bliss-bestowing hands," a description of the final stage of the Zen path illustrated by the Ten Oxherding Pictures (Stevens 1977, 16), and claims that instead of promoting the superiority of his hermitage, Ryōkan "was detached from his detachment" (Stevens 1977, 16). In this view, Ryōkan is seen as someone who has progressed through the stages of Zen training and has returned to the world to save other beings. The question then arises: what is the significance of living in reclusion for someone who has returned to the marketplace?

Despite its non-political and removed appearance, reclusion, in its many forms, always remains a particular mode of engaging with society, often for political motives and often without physical distance. Frederick Mote, Aat Vervoorn, and Alan Berkowitz all agree that the basic paradigm for eremitism in China appears to have been first established by the works of Confucius and is predicated primarily upon the withdrawal from public office or service to the state; eremitism is not dependent upon physical isolation, and the general purpose of withdrawal is for self-cultivation and preservation of moral integrity (Berkowitz xi, 228; Mote 253; Vervoorn 8). Confucius justified the eremitic life according to his ideal of public service: "The gentleman serves in office as long as by doing so he can further the Way; once that becomes impossible he must

resign to avoid moral compromise" (Vervoorn 30).[18] Therefore, Confucianism promotes an eremitism of moral integrity that emphasizes one's individual morality over service to the state, and hermits following this ideal became ethical models in Confucian society. Confucius praised the righteousness of legendary recluses Po Yi and Shu-ch'i who starved to death in reclusion rather than serve what they considered to be an illegitimate government, and they became exemplars for officials who followed them into retreat (Lau 1979, 16.12, 141). This withdrawal did not prevent social interaction, however. Certain hermits did physically distance themselves from society, but since eremitism was dependent upon withdrawal from public service and not on solitude, many so called "hermits" had significant social contact, and according to Vervoorn, their epithets, such as "men of the cliffs and caves," often did not reflect reality (Vervoorn 6-7).

In contrast to the Confucian model of moral integrity, Taoist philosophy advocated a different form of eremitism, an eremitism of anonymity, which nevertheless still depended on withdrawal from public service. The Taoist thinker Chuang-tzu rejected the practice of physical isolation and supported the ideal of mental reclusion instead, which involved withdrawal from ordinary human pursuits (Vervoorn 40). Largely as a means of self-preservation, one should remain anonymous and stay out of political life altogether in order to avoid

[18] Vervoorn's quote is a paraphrase of this passage of *The Analects*: "The term 'great minister' refers to those who serve their lord according to the Way and who, when this is no longer possible, relinquish office" (Lau 1979, 11.24, 109). This passage also has been used to support reclusion: "Show yourself when the Way prevails in the Empire, but hide yourself when it does not" (Lau 1979, 8.13, 94).

drawing attention to oneself and thus, avoid being the object of jealousy or anger (Vervoorn 55-56). In contrast to the Confucian hermit who displays his individual morality, the key to the Taoist is to remain unknown. Thus, one does not separate oneself by physical withdrawal but becomes invisible within society (Vervoorn 58). In the Confucian ideal, there would be no hermits since everyone should be serving the government when it conforms to moral standards (Vervoorn 230), but for Taoists, ideally everyone should renounce pursuits that would establish one's individuality and thus, create an "eremitic society" (Vervoorn 60).

Eremitism within society led to the ideal of the "hermit at court," defined as an attitude of detachment from worldly concerns while still in public office (Vervoorn 186). This is the ideal exhibited by Vimalakīrti, who represents the Chinese Buddhist model for eremitism. Vimalakīrti's life embodies his message on nonduality; thus, his behavior is marked by a number of seeming contradictions. Although he lives as a layman in society with a wife and children and engages in all aspects of society, he fundamentally remains solitary, non-attached, and undefiled (Thurman 20-21). Vimalakīrti's life and the "hermit at court" ideal express the nonduality of reclusion and public service, an ideal that some actually attempted in Chinese official life. Others, like Han-shan and Ryōkan, however, did physically withdraw while pursuing Buddhist ideals. While many adopted Buddhist and Taoist motives in enacting eremitic ideals, Berkowitz argues that the nature of their eremitism is still essentially defined by the secular practice of withdrawing from an official career (Berkowitz 2), and

this is basically the criteria followed by Han-shan and Ryōkan despite their physical seclusion and Buddhist practice.

In Japan, the pursuit of Buddhist ideals most often provided the motive for reclusion. Reclusion is often defined not only in terms of withdrawal from public service but withdrawal from monastic institutions as well. This is true of the aesthete-recluse tradition where individuals pursued Buddhist ideals through their dedication to poetry and music (Pandey 49). Even these aesthete-recluses, however, could have political motives. According to Marra, the theme of reclusion in Japanese literary arts serves as the only available medium to express political discontent against the "dominant ideology" (Marra 7), and the loss of political power by members of court families serves as the basis of their "aesthetics of discontent" (Marra 10-11). Reclusion also served as a political tool for those in power. In the Japanese political system of *insei*, emperors abdicated the throne and went into withdrawal in order to secure the royal successor. These emperors continued to exert political power despite the appearance of withdrawal.

The theme of reclusion in poetry is also tied to political involvement in China. As argued by Stephen Owen, the audience for poetry was limited to an elite, literate class, mostly composed of government officials, and poetry generally served to express support for the imperial government (Owen 27). Ironically, the theme of reclusion became important in poetry for precisely this reason. Poetry was used to express either public service or private withdrawal, and since the theme of reclusion in poetry emphasized the "purely personal

inclination" of the individual who chose to withdraw from society, it, therefore, removed any sense of challenge to the central government (Owen 30). For these reasons, the theme of reclusion became a legitimate option, which did not directly threaten the government's power through the support of an alternate political force (Owen 30) and was often adopted by those who were not truly withdrawn from society. Because of the use of reclusion as a literary trope, Berkowitz states that "the alluring imagery of reclusion in the abstract is, in a certain sense, a disembodied construction" (Berkowitz xii). Nevertheless, withdrawal from public service often questioned the government's moral legitimacy, and although in the case of Han-shan and Ryōkan their reclusion did not directly challenge the structure or morality of the government, it did challenge — on a much broader scale — the fundamental orientation of society and its individual members.

For the Zen practitioner, the essential problem with the mode of eremitism is the potential dualities between public service and withdrawal and nature and society. Although Ryōkan and Han-shan both lived in solitude in the mountains,[19] their reclusion is still primarily defined by withdrawal from public service, not by isolation. In their case, not only are their modes of reclusion not as distant as expected, but reclusion serves as a means of social critique and engagement. According to Michele Marra, the ideal of non-attachment is

[19] According to historical evidence, Ryōkan did live in solitude in the mountains even though he did spend much time interacting with village people. The case of Han-shan is not so clear but if we take his word for it and from the evidence in his poems that he was led into reclusion from failure at public office, we can gather that he lived in seclusion. According to the legend, Han-shan survived through the help of his friend, Shih-te, who was the cook at the temple and provided his meals. Apart from this legend, how he would manage to sustain himself is a mystery.

hampered by reclusion since, "In the end, the figure of the enlightened recluse emerges as one who lives in constant awareness of the unsolvable contradiction existing between his attachment to a life of reclusion and the total, spiritual detachment which must be the target of reclusion itself" (Marra 70). Han-shan and Ryōkan, like Vimalakīrti, avoid this dilemma by illustrating a nondual and nonattached mode of reclusion, while still providing significance to the role of the recluse. Ultimately, the recluse withdraws from the world, not to transcend it, but to realize its very nature. In line with the logic of non-transcendence, at the same time as these poets withdraw from the ordinary goals of society, their reclusion becomes a means to critique and transform society primarily through the medium of poetry and thus, does not transcend social engagement.

Han-shan as Recluse

Han-shan has established a legendary reputation for his reclusive lifestyle and takes his name from his remote and austere residence, Cold Mountain, as in the Chinese custom of taking the name of one's place or social role. Although a distinction is often made in English language scholarship between "Han-shan," the poet, and "Cold Mountain," his residence, a clear distinction cannot always be made in the Chinese; Cold Mountain (transliterated as "Han-shan") is the term used for both the poet and his residence. As expressed by Arthur Waley: "In his poems the Cold Mountain is often the name of a state of mind rather than of a locality" (Waley 1954, 3). It is true that the poetic descriptions of his home are often allegorical for a religious quest or state of mind. However, these can still be

valid descriptions of the nature of his residence, as the nature of his home and the nature of his mind are often mutually reflective, even if the descriptions of the mountain are totally allegorical. Furthermore, his identification with his place is symbolic of his reclusion and identification with nature.

That being said, Han-shan could well have been an urban bureaucrat who did not live in the mountains and merely adopted the reclusive literary trope in order to startle readers with provocative images of renunciation and establish an attractive allegory for Buddhist enlightenment. Chinese poets often took on the voices of others, including writing in the reclusive mode without altering their everyday public service. Despite the fact that Han-shan actually criticizes these "nominal recluses," (Henricks 378) and although it is impossible to establish his (or other authors') actual mode of living, it appears unlikely that Han-shan lived in as austere conditions as he portrays, as many of the images of remoteness, such as the consumption of ferns for sustenance, are merely literary references — in this example, to a political act by Po Yi and Shu-ch'i (mentioned previously) who, according to legend, actually died while trying to survive on ferns, as they refused "to eat the grain" of the current government, which they considered to be illegitimate (Hori 2003, 695). In any case, according to biographical information in his poems, it seems likely that Han-shan did live in some degree of isolation, and his often realistic view of the hardships of eremitic life would suggest actual experience living in seclusion. If Han-shan was in fact merely an official living in an urban dwelling called Cold Mountain Hall, his poetry still effects the "hermit

at court" ideal and can express the withdrawal found in a non-transcendent paradigm.

Whether or not Han-shan was merely an urban bureaucrat, according to the evidence in his poems, it is true that Han-shan did not always live so far removed from society as his legendary image supposes. He initially adopted, voluntarily or involuntarily, a Confucian style of reclusion, defined by withdrawal from public service and justified with Confucian ideals, which gradually became more and more imbued with Buddhist goals and values. At first, Han-shan became a "fields and gardens" recluse in the model of the well-known poet-recluse T'ao Ch'ien (T'ao Yüan-ming)[20](365-427 C.E.), to whose poetry Han-shan makes various allusions. Apparently, Han-shan initially withdrew from public office voluntarily, and he, his wife, and child supported themselves through farming. Since the Chinese model of reclusion, being strictly defined by withdrawal from service to the state, did not necessitate a life of solitude, withdrawing with one's family was not an uncommon option. This image of Han-shan paints quite a different picture of his reclusive life compared to the usual portrayal of his austere, solitary existence. Here he fits the model of the Confucian gentlemen who goes into reclusion to pursue scholarly activities and maintain moral integrity:

> A thatched hut is home for a country man;
> Horse or carriage seldom pass my gate:
> Forests so still all the birds come to roost,
> Broad valley streams always full of fish.

[20] Ryōkan also includes many allusions to his poems (see Yuasa 17-18). According to Watson, T'ao Ch'ien is the father of reclusive poetry and takes as his themes: "quietude and rustic simplicity, the joys of wine and family life, and a vague longing for the past" (Watson 1971, 76-77).

I pick wild fruit in hand with my child,
Till the hillside fields with my wife.
And in my house what do I have?
Only a bed piled high with books. (Watson 1970, #2, 20)

Han-shan even claims to be bothered by Confucian scholars who try to convince him to return to public life and accept office (Watson 1970, 54) — a practice which was common since recluses were thought to be men who held steadfast to Confucian values and thus, were considered to be ideal for public office.

In other poems Han-shan appears not to have become a recluse in order to transcend the dust of society, either for Confucian standards of morality or Buddhist goals, but because of his failure to succeed at Confucian examinations and obtain public office:

I'm not so poor at reports and decisions—
Why can't I get ahead in the government?
The rating officials are determined to make life hard.
All they do is try to expose my faults.
Everything, I guess, is a matter of Fate;
Still, I'll try the exam again this year.
A blind boy aiming at the eye of a sparrow
Might just accidentally manage a hit. (Watson 1970, #19, p 37)

Furthermore, at least early in his life he did not glorify the life of poverty that he later acclaimed. In one poem he reveals that living in poverty was not his choice:

I used to be fairly poor, as poor goes;
Today I hit the bottom of poverty and cold.
Nothing I do seems to come out right;
Wherever I go I get pushed around.
I walk the muddy road and my footsteps falter;
I sit with the other villagers and my stomach
aches with hunger.
Since I lost the brindle cat,
The rats come right up and peer into the pot. (Watson 1970, #24, 42)

After being laughed at for "being a hick" he even exclaims: "One day when I get a lot of money/ I'll have a hat as high as that pagoda there!" (Watson 1970, #26, 44). One scholar thinks that this is a later addition since the interest in money is so inconsistent with Han-shan's other poems (Henricks 260). The events of the poet's early life may very well have been the impetus for his satires on the value of Confucian learning and the lives of Confucian scholars as well as his criticism of greed and wealth and his sympathy for the poor.

According to his poetry, his wife eventually left him while living a life of a farmer-recluse; he then moved further from society to his final home at Cold Mountain, which is characterized by the austere remoteness typically associated with the poet's lifestyle. The mountain is described as a cold, rugged landscape of cliffs and gorges and is marked by an absence of human activity and work:

> The path to Han-shan's place is laughable,
> A path, but no sign of cart or horse.
> Converging gorges — hard to trace their twists
> Jumbled cliffs — unbelievable rugged.
> A thousand grasses bend with dew,
> A hill of pines hums in the wind.
> And now I've lost the shortcut home,
> Body asking shadow, how do you keep up? (Snyder 1966, #1, 35)[21]

The paths and trails on the mountain take on a very different meaning from roads used for the transportation of material goods; on Cold Mountain, they are either symbolic of the path of religious pursuit or associated with the natural trails of wildlife. Han-shan, seemingly, has gone so far down this path that he is greatly separated from his old home and the people he knew in society.

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[21] There is still a trace of the fields and gardens recluse in this poem as the second line is an allusion to a poem by T'ao Ch'ien (Henricks, 34).

Han-shan's emphasis on the purity of his solitary life in nature creates a duality between nature and society and contains an attitude of transcendence from society. Images of clarity and purity abound in Cold Mountain. The moon frequently appears as a symbol of light and pure white color. The jade-colored streams are fresh and crystal clear. Han-shan constantly finds himself drifting with the white clouds, hanging clear and distant from worldly dust. Even the coldness of the mountain penetrates all perfectly without fault. Cold Mountain is an ideal setting of idleness and calm that clears away conventional worries.

The purity of Han-shan's natural surroundings is contrasted with the defilement of the city. Snyder uses direct, modern language to humorously translate the following lines that criticize the impure pursuits of society:

> In a tangle of cliffs I chose a place —
> Bird-paths, but no trails for men.
> What's beyond the yard?
> White clouds clinging to vague rocks.
> Now I've lived here — how many years —
> Again and again, spring and winter pass.
> Go tell families with silverware and cars
> "What's the use of all that noise and money?" (Snyder 1966, #2, 35)

Han-shan has no desire to be stained by the material desires and chaotic nature of urban life, and after describing the wonders of his mountain home, he proclaims from his detached standpoint in reclusion:

> Though I look down again on the dusty world,
> What is that land of dreams to me? (from Watson 1970, #44, 62)

The problem with the dusty world, according to this passage, is not any physical defilement of the city, however, but rather its illusory dreams. Dust is a standard Buddhist metaphor referring to the "six dusts," or "six *gunas*," which are the

sense perceptions (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thought) that defile the purity of the mind. Here, the dust of the city appears as the pursuit of insubstantial objects such as wealth and money. The physical dust and the noise of the city are disdained as the unpleasant by-products of egotistical striving but in themselves are also manifestations of impermanence and insubstantiality, which are precisely the notions that the image of "dust" is meant to provoke.

As seen in the next poem, Cold Mountain's purity does not depend on its remoteness but its lack of distinct boundaries, suggesting the limitlessness of Han-shan's habitat as well as his individual self:

> Cold Mountain is a house
> Without beams or walls.
> The six doors left and right are open
> The hall is blue sky.
> The rooms are all vacant and vague
> The east wall beats on the west wall
> At the center nothing. (from Snyder 1966, #16, 39).

In this case, Cold Mountain is identified with the conventional ("house") but is ultimately constructed. His home is no longer in human society but neither is it limited to a specific or "pure" location. Han-shan's home is pure in its lack of division, and fundamentally, he has no home. This is true in a literal sense as well, since after all, he may very well have been forced into solitude from his failure to establish a secure place in society. From the top of his mountain, Han-shan declares the boundlessness of his world:

> High, high from the summit of the peak,
> Whatever way I look, no limit in sight! (from Watson 1970, 62).

This may be allegorical for the limitless view from the peak of religious insight and the boundlessness of buddha-nature, but even if it is allegorical, it is still

reflective of how Han-shan conceptualizes and perceives his place as well as the nature of all phenomena. Han-shan's nature as an individual, the nature of his home, and the nature of religious insight are all mutually reflective of one another in their manifestation of emptiness.

Although Cold Mountain is symbolic for the ultimate, it is not a supernatural world of immortals. Instead, Cold Mountain is ultimate in its lack of distinction between self and other and as a locus for Han-shan's identification with the ordinary, phenomenal world and the realization of its emptiness. There is little difference between Han-shan's home and the natural environment. We see the conventional elements of his hut completely composed of and blended with those of his natural surroundings until no distinction can be clearly made:

> I divined and chose a distant place to dwell —
> T'ien-t'ai: what more is there to say?
> Monkeys cry where valley mists are cold;
> My grass gate blends with the color of the crags.
> I pick leaves to thatch a hut among the pines,
> Scoop out a pond and lead a runnel from the spring.
> By now I am used to doing without the world.
> Picking ferns, I pass the years that are left. (Watson 1970, 43)

In another poem, he describes the "grass" as his "mattress," the "blue sky" as his "quilt," and uses a "stone" for a pillow (Snyder 1966, 7). His home is not limited to a thatched hut but extends over all of Cold Mountain, and Han-shan identifies himself as his place and not as a separate individual living *on* Cold Mountain. Nevertheless, Han-shan does not conflate his human form beyond ordinary bounds but sees his individual form as insignificant in nature.

> There's a naked bug at Cold Mountain
> With a white body and a black head.
> His hand holds two book-scrolls,

> One the Way and one its Power.
> His shack's got no pots or oven,
> He goes for a walk with his shirt and pants askew.
> But he always carries the sword of wisdom:
> He means to cut down senseless craving. (Snyder 1966, #15, 38)

Despite being an insignificant bug, the poem ends with a return to the grandiose image of Han-shan carrying the "sword of wisdom." The great wisdom of Han-shan, however, is the realization of the insubstantiality of both himself and objects of desire.

On the surface, the wilderness of Han-shan's residence is sharply juxtaposed to the Chinese walled cities with their square, rigid boundaries and grid-shaped organization. But, although Cold Mountain symbolically represents an ultimate realm, its impermanence, boundlessness, and naturalness are not fundamentally different from the characteristics of cities. It is not that society is unnatural, but human-centered activity distracts people from the perception of their impermanence and dependence on the natural, phenomenal world as well as the insignificance of their values and pursuits in the greater context of the ever-changing environment. Cities deceive urban-dwellers with the construction of permanent walls and fixed divisions, but these illusions of stability soon crumble with the inevitable passing of human lives and royal dynasties. In contrast, Han-shan's lifestyle is well-suited for the realization of the "true nature" of himself and his place as empty and selfless, because of the absence of human value and human-centered activity and goals, often predicated upon notions of an independent, permanent self. It is this insight that Han-shan is advocating in his poetry addressed to those of urban society. Over and over again he stresses the

impermanence, not of the mountains, as much as the impermanence of the lives of civilized humans and their wealth, fame, power, and beauty.

> Wise men may be free of greed,
> But not the fool, who loves to dig for gold.
> His fields encroach on his neighbors' lands;
> And the bamboo grove? "This is all mine!"
> See him elbow his way in search of money,
> Gnash his teeth and drive his horses and slaves—
> Look there, beyond the city grates,
> How many grave mounds under the pines! (Watson 1970, #27, 45)

Han-shan's critique of worldly pursuits is always founded upon the inevitability of death, as presented here in the image of the cemetery, and the failure to conform to one's impermanent nature.

Along with being a context for the realization of emptiness and impermanence, reclusion also serves as a locus of trans-descendence. Han-shan has not cut all his ties and attachments to the social world of humans as reflected in his participation in poetic discourse. While Han-shan believes that engagement in social interactions will inevitably lead to suffering and loss, he is not able to leave social practices behind:

> Go into the world, and you're bound to be troubled and disturbed.
> The affairs of the world are not all alike.
>
> I'm not yet able to leave common customs behind;
> It is these that follow me around.
>
> Yesterday we mourned the death of Hsü Number Five;
> Today we escort Liu the Third to his grave.
>
> All day long I've been unable to rest;
> Because of this, my heart is saddened and grieved. (Henricks 212)

Here, Han-shan also reveals his nature as a social individual who has been conditioned by "common customs" of society — in this case the rituals of

mourning. Even Han-shan's radical lifestyle is shaped by Confucian ideals of reclusion and poetry. Evidently, instead of cutting off one's human ties, withdrawal from social interaction into a life of solitude makes one's dependence on others and the desire for social interaction strikingly real and clear. Consistent with the paradigm of trans-descendence, at these moments of sadness, Han-shan is realizing his humanity and relationship with the human community, not achieving an independence from them. Oddly enough, particular to the reclusive literary trope is the theme of friendship (Watson 1971, 73), and Han-shan expresses his desire to have "a companion in my search for the Way" (Watson 1970, #60, 78), someone who can appreciate his mind and also enact the reclusive ideal. It would seem that the recluse does not intend to separate himself from human contact as much as establish a loose "society" of reclusive companions and even construct lineages of eremitic families in the model of the "fields and gardens" recluse, where people subsist within communities withdrawn from worldly gain.

Han-shan's poetry is the means through which he involves himself in society and attempts to re-orient its self-centered motives, and it is from his place of reclusion that Han-shan speaks with society and challenges us to meet him face to face. In this context, Han-shan criticizes both silence and quietist reclusion, both aspects commonly and inappropriately attached to Buddhism:

> If you sit in silence and never speak,
> What stories will you leave for the young people to tell?
> If you live shut away in a forest thicket,
> How can the sun of wisdom shine out?
> No dried up carcass can be the guardian of the Way.
> Wind and frost bring sickness and early death.

Plow with a clay ox in a field of stone
And you will never see the harvest day! (Watson 1970, #53, 71)

Han-shan's poems directly confront and criticize various aspects of society. Often his poems are social satires of Confucian society but also contain criticism of Buddhist monks and institutions. He has plenty of opinions and worldly advice on poverty, marriage, and greed; he adamantly protests against the habit of eating meat, and in one poem he even gives advice on making money: "A man should never stay poor;/ If you're penniless you must manage and plan" (Henricks 198).

As in the context of poetry where he does not abandon language for a non-linguistic mode of being, Han-shan's point in his reclusive life is not to cut himself off from social interaction but rather to engage in society with a selfless orientation: to engage in society without attachment to fulfilling the futile desires for permanence and individual wealth. This is not only the message of Han-shan's poems but his mode of operation within poetry and his mountain hermitage.

Ryōkan as Recluse

Ryōkan left home to enter the monastery and rejected a future career as village headman. After training in the monastery, Ryōkan returned to his village to live at his hermitage, *Gogō-an*, named after the five portions of rice that sustained the previous reclusive inhabitant. His move to hermitage was somewhat voluntary, but the information about the situation that led to his decision to live is not completely certain. In a reference to Han-shan he describes himself as, "Too foggy to earn my own livelihood ever since I was born," although he also declares: "I aspire not to gain the dust of worldly fame and fortune" (Yuasa 59).

It is possible that non-religious factors may have encouraged Ryōkan into a life of reclusion, but without doubt, his withdrawn lifestyle was a means to realize Buddhist ideals.

His hut in the mountains remained at a distance from society, and in another reference to Han-shan, he describes it as being "barred from human approach" (Yuasa 47). However, Ryōkan gives the impression that his life is less remote and austere than that of Han-shan and it always retains a social character. He was far more involved with the town's people as he spent much of his time interacting with society on his begging rounds, and he enjoyed meeting with friends and playing with children. Nevertheless, his life is characterized by its simple poverty and solitude. He writes often of his loneliness, cold, hunger, and hardship, and his hut was cut off from human contact in the winter.

Like his idol Han-shan, Ryōkan's life appears to be free and easy without the work or worry of ordinary human life, since at his mountain hermitage "no worldly troubles intrude" (Abé and Haskel 120), but this does not mean that his life is without contact from "worldly" humans. Although it is true that human presence is limited at his hut itself, it is the worries of self-interested pursuit, not human relationships, that fade away in the mountains. By accepting the rising and falling away of pleasure and pain, profit and loss, there are no pressing concerns of gaining social status or material prosperity that become irrelevant outside the human context. Ryōkan is not without sadness, loneliness, hunger and other difficulties, but he does not worry himself with the establishment of wealth or fame and explains the resultant joy:

How many winters and springs have passed
Since I came to live in this secluded place?
My only vegetables are bean leaves and wild spinach
For rice, it's whatever I can beg from the neighbors
My greatest joy is to have so few worldly concerns
I've never minded the poverty of a hermit's life
Since coming home I've grown uncommonly lazy
I sit, I lie down, I do just as I like (Abé and Haskel 198)

As a hermit, his life derives its playful freedom from his lack of purpose or intention, and he proudly calls himself: "The most useless man there ever was!" (Abé and Haskel 201).

Ryōkan is more interested in the opportunity to interact with like-minded individuals than to separate himself from the human world. On several occasions, Ryōkan expresses his longing for companionship in his life of renunciation, and also asks if anyone is willing to join him through similar invitations and challenges as those of Han-shan:

All alone, leaning against a solitary pine
Together with the tree again
  letting the time slip by
Is there anyone in this whole wide world
Who'll come along with me? (Abé and Haskel 194)

These verses promote the reclusive ideal while at the same time inviting others to join in his solitude and making reclusion accessible to others.

While Ryōkan claims to have "never minded hardship, hunger, and cold" (Abé and Haskel 115), he does not glorify solitude or poverty nor transcend the difficulties associated with them:

Will my stupidity and stubbornness ever end?
Poor and alone—that's my life
Twilight on the streets of a ramshackle town
Going home again with an empty bowl (Abé and Haskel 114)

Instead of praising himself for the righteousness of reclusive life, Ryōkan refers to his stupidity and stubbornness and even holds his attachment to the beauty of nature responsible for his poverty (Abé and Haskel 141). Consistent with this mundane view of solitude is Ryōkan's intolerance for transcendental images of Taoist recluses. On his list of things that he dislikes and wishes to avoid, the one entry for "Groundless beliefs" is: "Stories about mountain hermits who fly through the clouds and eat only mist" (Abé and Haskel 251).

The difference between the life of reclusion and the life of society is always predicated upon the absence or presence of worldly intention, respectively.

> A Buddhist monk of the old Indians' school
> I hid myself on Mount Kugami
>   I don't recall how many springtimes ago
> I've worn out countless pairs of robes
> But my staff has never left my side
> Following the mountain streams
>   I wander singing along distant paths
> Or sit and watch the white clouds
>   billowing from jagged peaks
> Pity the traveler in the floating world
>   of fame and fortune
> His life spent chasing after specks of
>   swirling dust! (Abé and Haskel 199)

The "traveler in the floating world" is pitied for the futile pursuit of impermanent objects, the "dust" of fame and fortune, as if these ends were substantial and ultimately obtainable. As with Han-shan, Ryōkan's social criticism is based on human failure to realize impermanence:

> How short, and how deplorable, is man's life on the earth!
> A hundred years' joy once past is just a springtime dream.
> Soon as our breath fails, we are already out of the world.
> We are men, as long as the four elements dwell in harmony.

What is all this, then, I hear about men fighting proudly
For fame and gains, like heroes, in defiance of other men?
Come, I pray you to cast your eye through the windy gloom
Over the sagebrush moors, dotted with unearthed skeletons.
(Yuasa #107, 74)

However, in contrast to Han-shan, Ryōkan explicitly states that there need not be a fundamental difference between the life of reclusion and life in society, since the primary concern is avoiding the perpetuation of self-interested pursuits and not with the physical differences between nature and society. Living in the mountains is not essential for one who can live in society without addiction to worldly desires:

Don't envy me living apart from the world of men
If you're content, you'll naturally be at peace
Who can say that amid the green hills
Are not lurking the wolves and tigers of the mind? (Abé and Haskel 136)

While reclusion in the mountains may be an opportune place for selfless realization, it does not immunize one from delusive passions, i.e. "wolves and tigers." This poem, like the next one, which belittles the significance of isolation, explicitly illustrates that Ryōkan's purpose is to renounce the pursuit of delusive passions and not to escape society itself.

It's not that I don't care
To mingle with others
Only that I'm better
At amusing myself (Abé and Haskel 209)

And also:

I'm content just living this life of mine
It's not that I loathe the dust of the world (from Abé and Haskel 195)

A similar rejection of the exceptional nature of the reclusive life is expressed in *Dream Dialogue* where Ryōkan appears to validate both living in the city and living in solitude:

> Going into town to beg
> I meet a wise old man on the road
> He asks me: "Master, why do you live there
>   in the mountains, among white clouds?"
> "And you," I ask him:
> "Why do you live out your days
>   here in the world's red dust?"
> We both start to answer, but then remain silent
> And the dawn gong startles me from my dream (Abé and Haskel 184)

Ryōkan and the wise man both have their reasons for their chosen lifestyle, but they are unable to put them into words as words are insufficient in justifying either lifestyle. Neither man can fundamentally distinguish between social and solitary living nor ultimately rationalize a higher value for one or the other. In place of rational explanation, their silence and the sound of the gong resolve their dilemma and disagreement. The gong is representative of the Buddhist temple, and its sound permeates all indiscriminately. Although urban-dwelling and mountain-dwelling each retain their unique function and significance, the sound of the bell connects both modes of being and wakes up both men to the goal of selfless action regardless of the environment. The bell shatters Ryōkan's "dream" of the fundamental difference between reclusion and social engagement and awakens him to their nonduality.

One significant feature of reclusion, however, is that it provides Ryōkan with a context in which he can realize his identification with the natural world and lose a sense of separate human identity. On the one hand, Ryōkan finds

himself becoming friends with non-human and even inanimate objects, such as the neighboring plants, hills, and streams (Abé and Haskel 195; Yuasa 62), and his best friend is always his poor and simple and often empty begging bowl. Even more so, Ryōkan *becomes* the natural objects around him. The description of natural images in Zen poetry can reflect the nonduality of self and other as the poet is cut out of the picture while identifying with the object. Ryōkan is often more explicit about his deep connection with nature. In one poem, he refers to himself as "sūtra-chanting spring bird" (Yuasa 127) and in another he identifies his life with a stream:

> Faint trickle of
> mossy water from
> a crevice in the mountain rock:
> the clear still way
> I pass through the world (Watson 1977, 20)

Here we see Ryōkan's clarity and purity expressed by his impermanence and lack of fixed boundaries — features which are not unique to Ryōkan but which he puts into practice in his daily actions. Ryōkan takes running water as his model of action in this poem on the surroundings of his hut, *Tribute to Gogō-an*:

> The water of the valley stream
> Never shouts at the tainted world
> "Purify yourself!"
> But naturally, as it is
> Shows how it is done (Abé and Haskel 210)

Here, Ryōkan acknowledges his preference for actualization over rational arguments and demands. The stream shows us how to be pure by actualizing its original, impermanent nature without the attempt to be permanent. For Ryōkan the world is "tainted" not because it lacks purity, but through its striving for

independence and permanence, it does not realize, in either a conceptual or actual way, that it is always and already pure. When the purity of impermanence is acknowledged, the entire universe becomes pure: "Everywhere I look, the world is vast, clear / without a trace of dust" (Abé and Haskel 166). Nevertheless, the conventional distinction of "tainted" or "impure" is used for actions that fail to realize these fundamental conditions of existence.

Reclusion is also a context for Ryōkan to accept his fundamental homelessness that inhibits the reification of his physical residence as a realm independent from society:

> I have been wandering
> Like a floating cloud
> As I have no place to stay in;
> Thus I have lived so far. (Kodama and Yanagishima 63)

The transience of both Ryōkan's environment and his individual self prevents Ryōkan from resting in any permanent place.

From the distance of reclusion, Ryōkan realizes his dependence on others more profoundly than Han-shan does and illustrates a greater sense of compassion. His reliance on others is particularly exemplified by the constant activity of his begging rounds and the sustenance he receives through gifts from friends. Ryōkan acknowledges this dependence in his poems as well as his enjoyment of being in the company of friends:

> In my thatch hut, with nothing but the four bare walls
> Relying on others, I live out my remaining years
> Sometimes an old friend comes to stay
> And we sit up together listening
>   to the music of the bell-ring insects (Abé and Haskel 122)

Ryōkan's life of solitude exaggerates feelings of loneliness and awareness of his attachment to people and thus, illustrates a trans-descendence back into human bonds. As he notes, his reclusion is not helpful in forgetting about human society:

> It may seem that I have locked myself
> Away from the people of the world
> And yet
> Why is it
> I have never ceased to think of them? (Abé and Haskel 211)

Many of Ryōkan's poems are expressions of the loneliness he feels in seclusion and the sadness at the passing of his friends, his teachers, and even objects of nature. So many of his poems end with the mention of his tears that the theme starts to seem insincere. However, his genuine sadness and loneliness comes through in poems like this one:

> It's not the same this year as last
> Things now aren't what they were
> I wonder where my old friends are?
> New friends already have begun drifting off
> It's worst of all at this time of year
>   now when the leaves are scattering down
> When mountains and streams turn somber again
> nothing anywhere seems to please
> Everything I see
> Fills me with icy loneliness (Abé and Haskel 170)

Even from the remoteness of his home, he identifies with the suffering of those living in society, and in contrast to Han-shan his concern with worldly pursuit is often expressed as compassion rather than criticism. On seeing people of the world "all busy trying to satisfy their hungry desires," he comments:

> Alas, I cannot but take pity on the proud men of the world,
> For they are doomed to an endless struggle, robbed of rest.
> Tears run down my face, in spite of myself, as I sit alone,

And muse on man's wretched state over and over in the dark.
(from Yuasa #105, 73)

For Ryōkan, reclusion is an opportunity to develop a sense of compassion for the world rather than a detached position of transcendence, and it is Ryōkan's realization of interdependence in solitude that leads to an awareness of his inseparability from both human settlements and non-human wilderness. As we will see, it is not Ryōkan's transcendence from suffering but his ordinary desires that allow for his compassion and egoless connection to the world.

Conclusion

While Han-shan and Ryōkan withdraw from the ordinary pursuits of human society, their reclusion is not a transcendence from the conventional world. Rather, their withdrawn, solitary lifestyles are a means to realize the nature of the conventional world as empty and impermanent. Their intention is not to uphold their individual moral integrity, as in the Confucian model, or remain anonymous for self-preservation like the Taoist model but to challenge self-centered orientations that are particularly exaggerated in urban settings. Han-shan and Ryōkan only serve as models of the ideal reclusive lifestyle in their submission to nature as the ultimate paradigm for ethical activity. Nature here refers not just to wilderness but to the empty nature of things. While the wilderness is skillfully juxtaposed to the profit driven structures of human habitation, Ryōkan and Han-shan emphasize the fundamental, selfless nature of both the wilderness and the city. Their concern is not with abandoning or fundamentally altering the social nature of humans; rather, they criticize society

for failing to realize, through self-centered strivings for wealth, power, fame, and immortality, its own impermanent, interdependent nature.

While both poets, particularly Han-shan, often desire to cut all emotional ties and interaction with human society, their emotion for people of the past and engagement with society through poetry attest to their dependence on, rather than independence from, human society. Reflecting the three stages of nondual logic, reclusion as an other-worldly goal ends up with a return to the secular. At first, the recluse rejects the conventional householder life with its pursuit of ordinary human goals and attempts to leave the world of delusion and attachment behind in order to seek the purity and freedom of the mountains. In reclusion, however, one finds that it is humanly impossible to transcend the immanent world or human interaction.

Despite their rants against worldly pursuits, it should be made clear that Han-shan and Ryōkan are not without desire or self-interest, i.e. delusive passions. These desires are exemplified by Ryōkan's love of *sake*, nature, good friends, and children as well as his feelings of sadness; Han-shan also expresses both joys of solitude and periods of sorrow, and of course, both poets enjoy literature and writing. The next chapter will investigate how these desires function in their poetry and fit into the poets' ideas of buddha-nature and enlightenment.

Chapter Four

Trans-descendence: The Path to Cold Mountain

Introduction

As outlined in the introduction, the dualistic separation of enlightenment and delusion has prevented scholars from reconciling Han-shan's and Ryōkan's emotions of sadness and expressions of failure with the Zen ideal. Examining Han-shan's and Ryōkan's interpretation of that ideal, however, including the ideas of enlightenment and buddha-nature, the concept that all sentient beings are already Buddhas and inherently enlightened, reveals a non-transcendent view that does not deny ordinary feelings or seek a higher level of consciousness, existence, or knowledge. Instead, their ideal is to realize the very nature of ordinary existence and human nature with its passions and ignorance. Furthermore, seen through the interpretive lens of the functional model of language, expressions of sorrow and loneliness can manifest the selfless, non-transcendent heart/mind of these poets as well as their profound humanity. These expressions may be failures to fulfill a transcendent ideal but invoke a great awareness of impermanence and a non-attachment to a transcendent ego.

Cold Mountain

As mentioned previously, the name Han-shan, or Cold Mountain, traditionally represents the author, his place, and his state of mind. Encompassing all these elements is Cold Mountain's symbolism as buddha-nature, one's original

nature as empty, impermanent, and enlightened. Next to impermanence, buddha-nature is the most common theme in Han-shan's poems. Buddha-nature is often referred to through conventional images as the pearl or as a priceless jewel that is the mind; it is more valuable than any external object and maintains its character and worth despite the ever-changing nature of the phenomenal world. Here, Han-shan uses the images of the moon (as enlightenment) and sky (as emptiness) to illustrate the enlightened mind and its value:

> On top of Cold Mountain the lone round moon
> Lights the whole clear cloudless sky.
> Honor this priceless natural treasure
> Concealed in five shadows, sunk deep in the flesh. (Snyder 1966, #22, 40)[22]

Buddha-nature is not outside of ourselves, and its value is always put in terms of pricelessness since it is not an object that can be exchanged from one to another but is the inherent nature of things themselves.

While, on the one hand, Cold Mountain stands as the ever-present nature of the poet and the world, it also represents the spiritual goal to be attained. These conflicting elements are expressed together in discussion of the path:

> Men ask the way to Cold Mountain
> Cold Mountain: there's no through trail.
> In summer, ice doesn't melt
> The rising sun blurs in swirling fog.
> How did I make it?
> My heart's not the same as yours.
> If your heart was like mine
> You'd get it and be right here. (Snyder 1966, #6, 36)

[22] The "five shadows" are the five *skandhas*, the five elements (form, sensation, perception, will, and consciousness) that compose the self (Henricks 283).

Fundamentally, there is no path that goes to Cold Mountain since it is not an object to be attained or a final destination. Han-shan made it without a trail since it is not a separate condition or experience — he is already there — and his realization does not depend on a physical path but the realization of original mind. Or instead, the path can be seen in another way:

> I climb the road to Cold Mountain,
> The road to Cold Mountain that never ends. (Watson 1970, #40, 58)

While there is a way of practice, there is no end to the practice since it does not have an end different from its beginning. Being on the path to Cold Mountain, then, is the constant realization of one's immediate existence. After all, Han-shan is not only on the path to Cold Mountain, he *is* Cold Mountain. Or, in other words, Cold Mountain is on the path to Cold Mountain — a practice that actualizes the equality of the ends and means as well as their difference and parallels the idea that buddha-nature is both the mind that desires enlightenment and the mind of enlightenment. Interestingly, in the first poem, Han-shan distinguishes his own heart (or mind) from the heart/mind of those who ask how he arrived at Cold Mountain. Here there is a play between the ideas of original enlightenment and attainment. Although Cold Mountain is the original nature of the mind and all things, it is nevertheless something that humans fail to realize. Thus, Han-shan can maintain the conventional distinction between the awakened and deluded without denying original enlightenment. Here, the life of reclusion, does not depend on a physical location or physical exertion. Being "right here" or in the "center" (Henricks 44) does not refer to the mountains as much as the awareness of the immediate present.

That Cold Mountain symbolizes original enlightenment is also expressed in Han-shan's language of *returning* to Cold Mountain. His poem, cited previously, on purifying his ears after his early years of worldly living and education contains the line: "Today I'm back at Cold Mountain" (Snyder 1966, #12, 38), or "today I've come home to Han-shan" (Henricks 400). Henricks notes that the use of home is: "Not in the sense that he has lived here before, but in the sense that this is where he truly belongs" (Henricks 400). He belongs here since Cold Mountain manifests his empty nature, not only in terms of ontological being but in terms of selfless action associated with reclusion. Selfless behavior can be described as a return because it puts Buddha-nature, previously obscured by egotistical thoughts and clinging, into action.

As in LaFleur's model of symbolism discussed in Chapter Two, Cold Mountain, as symbol, functions as the identification of conventional and ultimate, form and emptiness. Emptiness, enlightenment, and buddha-nature only exist within the concrete world of Cold Mountain as physical location and as the identity of the poet. Buddha-nature and emptiness do not exist apart from ordinary objects or everyday mind. For this reason, despite the language of buddha-nature as a pearl within the mind, neither buddha-nature nor emptiness are distinct objects to be grasped or attained. Henricks describes Zen and Han-shan's message of buddha-nature as "Buddha is on the inside not on the outside" (Henricks 19) and also "in reality there is only one thing, the one mind" (Henricks 20), but this view also objectifies buddha-nature, which ultimately cannot have inside or outside, and turns mind into a 'thing' rather than 'no-thing,'

the absence of a fixed nature. One poem is particularly clear on the non-objective and nondual nature of buddha-nature and its connection to the image of Cold Mountain:

> My home was at Cold Mountain from the start,
> Rambling among the hills, far from trouble.
>
> Gone, and a million things leave no trace
> Loosed, and it flows through the galaxies
> A fountain of light, into the very mind —
> Not a thing, and yet it appears before me:
> Now I know the pearl of the Buddha-nature
> Know its use: a boundless perfect sphere. (Snyder 1966, #23, 40)

There is no inside or outside to this notion of buddha-nature which although is "not a thing" does not exist apart from the objective, phenomenal world appearing before Han-shan. After all, Han-shan's notion of mind and buddha-nature is without distinction of self and other, inside and outside.

> When you have learned to know in this way,
> You will know there is no inside or out! (from Watson 1970, #86, 104)[23]

The previous poem simultaneously describes the selfless nature of Cold Mountain as a physical location where impermanent objects "leave no trace" and as a symbol of Buddha-nature, whose ultimate referent remains undefined, non-objectifiable, and ungraspable.

The realization of buddha-nature is not a transcendence from the world but a complete identification with the immediate conditions of the ordinary world, which, according to Buddhism, is marked by impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. Han-shan does not transcend the impermanence of life and the

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[23] If you can know the mind in this way,
This is a knowledge that has no back side. (from Henricks 294-295)

inevitability of death nor is he free from the conditions and causes of the phenomenal world. Over and over again Han-shan lashes out against the foolish pursuit of immortality, associated with Taoist practices, and emphasizes death as the natural outcome to life. Although outnumbered by poems pointing to the inevitability of death, there are some poems, however, in which Han-shan appears to support the search for immortality. This may be explained by the fact that he did experiment with immortality practices and potions in his youth: "Tried drugs, but couldn't make Immortal" (Snyder 1966, #12, 38). He clearly failed, however, and he feels his strivings were in vain: "A waste of yourself, the search for long life" (Henricks 125). He never ceases to point out that all the Emperors, Buddhists, and Taoists who attempted to avoid death all ended up in graves overgrown with weeds:

> Lots of wise men have lived since ancient times,
> And there they lie, under the green hill. (from Watson 1970, #87, 105)

In the end, the only place Han-shan identifies with the land of the immortals is the royal cemetery (Henricks 91), since for Han-shan, death is the only definite outcome where everyone will rest.

Moreover, the delusive search for immortality leads to unnecessary pain and sorrow as expressed in this allegory of a crane, a conventional symbol of immortality, who sets out to a legendary mountain to gain eternal life:

> The crane, with a twig of bitter peach in his bill,
> Rested but once in thousand miles.
> He wanted to go to the mountain of P'eng-lai,
> And the peach was to serve him as food on the way.
> Still far from the goal, his feathers dropped off;
> Parted from the flock, his heart grew sad.
> And when he hurried home to his nest,

He found that his wife no longer knew him. (Watson 1970, #83, 101)

This poem appears to be allegorical for Han-shan's own life and religious quest and is reminiscent of his poem on the separation from his wife:

Last night in a dream I returned to my old home
And saw my wife weaving at her loom.
She held her shuttle poised, as though lost in thought,
As though she had no strength to lift it further.
I called. She turned her head to look,
But her eyes were blank — she didn't know me.
So many years we've been parted
The hair at my temples has lost its old color. (Watson 1970, #63, 81)

The poem also invokes a sense of sadness for his distance from his wife and even his loss of recognition in the world. The above allegory of the crane interestingly warns against Han-shan's own decision to separate himself from society to search for transcendent goals. In stark contrast to the legends of Han-shan's independent and joyful life out of the dust of society, here, he puts forth a humble, non-transcendent confession — albeit indirectly — of his ordinary human nature, dependent on human interaction, and his inability to reach the illusory land of immortality. The language of allegory creates a more appealing poem through its placement in a broader context of spiritual search and its critique of conventional symbols of immortality, but as well, the replacement of the subject with the image of the crane attests to a sense of shame for the foolish pursuit of unobtainable goals.

In his rejection of immortality, Han-shan affirms on several occasions that there is no transcendence from samsara, the world of rebirth and suffering, nor the pain and sadness associated with it:

The greatest sages from ancient times

> Have not shown us life immortal.
> What is born in time must die;
> All will be changed to dust and ashes.
> Bones pile up like Mount Vipula,
> Tears of parting would make a sea,
> And all that's left are empty names.
> Who escapes the wheel of birth and death? (Watson 1970, #74, 92)

Since Han-shan rejects escape from the realm of samsara, he is forced to identify with its suffering and desire. This is the realization of the Mahāyāna Buddhist maxim that nirvana is itself samsara. As Han-shan realizes there is no separation from samsara, there is no samsara to transcend and no self to transcend it; thus, liberation and suffering become one. While Han-shan rejects freedom from death and change, this acceptance itself is a transcendence of egotistical striving for independent, permanent existence. The realization of impermanence is like a continuous death and re-birth of the self, and thus, one's final death can be seen as merely a part in the constant flow of experience. However, this detached view, while important, eventually succumbs to the ordinary feelings and suffering of humankind.

We see Han-shan's humanity in a number of poems on the loss of friends and separation from others. One of the most well-known expressions of his attachment to others is found in the following poem:

> I have lived at Cold Mountain
> These thirty long years.
> Yesterday I called on friends and family:
> More than half had gone to the Yellow Springs.
> Slowly consumed, like a passing river.
> Now, morning, I face my lone shadow:
> Suddenly my eyes are bleared with tears. (Snyder 1966, #10, 37)

In this poem, we see Han-shan in the unusual activity of looking for people he knew from human society. Finding many of them gone to the "Yellow springs," which refers to the underworld, he initially takes on a seemingly detached view as he relates their passing to the ordinary impermanence of natural things. But, when he faces his own loneliness, impermanence, and insubstantiality ("my lone shadow"), he is surprised by his sudden tears and sadness. Perhaps this is a turning point in the poems of Han-shan — a point at which he had thought he had transcended attachments to the human world and ordinary feelings of sadness and despair but is suddenly aware of his ordinary humanity. On the surface, this poem reveals a failure on the path to being a non-attached Buddha. But if we read the poem as an expression of the poet's mind, as in the expressive-affective model of language, Han-shan reveals a selfless and sincere expression of humanity — a non-attachment to a transcendent ideal. Although he knows that things are impermanent, Han-shan realizes that he is not beyond ordinary desires for permanence and companionship. On the descriptive level, this poem recounts an experience of sadness that reveals ordinary, delusive attachment, and although his sadness is revealed in descriptive language, it is performative as a sincere and humble confession that embodies the selfless mind, unattached to asserting an egotistical image of transcendence. The descriptive and performative, then, function together in a paradoxical and nondual manner that clings to neither attachment nor non-attachment.

Another key feature of the expressive theory of language is the spontaneous, nonintentional display of emotion. In Han-shan's poem, not only

does the expression of emotion arise without self-conscious premeditation but the intention to be selfless is also absent. Han-shan does not attempt to put forth a selfless, detached image of himself, but instead he expresses his own attachments.

Han-shan recognizes only through his attempts to avoid sadness that it is not a condition from which he can separate himself permanently or completely:

> I've heard it said that sorrows are hard to dispel;
> These words, I've said, are not true.
>
> Yet yesterday morn I drove them away,
> And today I'm encumbered again.
>
> The month comes to an end, but my sorrow doesn't end;
> The year starts afresh, but my sorrows are also renewed.
>
> Who is to know that under this cap of cane
> There is fundamentally a man who's been sad a very long time.
> (Henricks 72)

Here we have a testament to Han-shan's complete failure to transcend suffering and his final and fundamental identification with sadness. Even a poem attributed by Pulleyblank to Han-shan II declares his unbearable depression (Watson 1970, #36, 54; Henricks 344); thus, if we accept Pulleyblank's division of Han-shan's poems, the theme of sadness was seemingly relevant even to those who made later additions to the Han-shan collection.

In a poem supposedly written in Han-shan's old age, the idea that sadness is an inevitable experience of existence arises from Han-shan's connection between his feelings at the loss of his family and youth with the impermanence of the seasons and natural objects:

> Last year, in the spring, when the birds were calling,

I thought of my brothers and kin.
This year, when fall chrysanthemums bloom,
I remember the time of my youth,
When green waters murmured in a thousand streams
And yellow clouds filled the sky.
Ah, all the hundred years of my life
Must I recall with such heartache those days in the capital?
(Watson 1970, #52, 70)

Waley translates the fifth line as "Green waters sob" (Waley 1954, #21, 7), an interpretation supported by Henricks (Henricks 254). Not only is sadness a natural response to the impermanence of things but nature itself appears to be sad in Han-shan's poem. In another poem, even hearing the songs of a fisherman from his distant life in reclusion fills him with sadness as he identifies with the feelings of others (Watson 1970, #41, 59). The attention to transience is not limited to external objects but takes on full meaning when impermanence relates back to the self and dislodges egotistical attachments to an independent self that merely observes change as an object. Han-shan's sadness is not only expressed for the passing away of others but for his own impermanence:

I sit alone in constant fret,
Pressed by endless thoughts and feelings.
Clouds hang about the waist of the mountain,
Wind moans in the valley mouth.
Monkeys come, shaking branches;
A bird flies into the wood with shrill cries.
Seasons pass and my hair grows ragged and grey;
Year's end finds me old and desolate. (Watson 1970, #51, 69)

This is quite a different picture of Han-shan from the one who is free of all troubles and joyfully lives his life of solitude without regret. However, besides the images of transcendence and wisdom constructed around Han-shan, like the suggestion that he is the incarnation of Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of wisdom,

Han-shan's poetry also contains themes of freedom and transcendence from ordinary troubles and suffering. Many of them comment on his clear and calm state of mind and his undefiled nature free of delusion:

> Among a thousand clouds and ten thousand streams,
> Here lives an idle man,
> In the daytime wandering over green mountains,
> At night coming home to sleep by the cliff.
> Swiftly the springs and autumns pass,
> But my mind is at peace, free from dust or delusion.
> How pleasant, to know I need nothing to lean on,
> To be still as the waters for the autumn river! (Watson 1970, #61, 79)

Some poems also present Han-shan's life in the mountains as eternally happy and carefree:

> Ever since I escaped to these cold cliffs,
> Happy I've been, forever I sing and I smile. (Henricks 401)

The contrast between these poems and his expressions of sadness raises the question of the exact nature of delusion and enlightenment in Han-shan's poems..

His identification with sadness does not mean that Han-shan is completely sorrowful and does not experience the joy and happiness that he often expresses about his life of reclusion. Han-shan has not transcended ordinary feelings of either sadness or happiness. His attitude of non-attachment is not one that lacks passion but corresponds to the model presented by Japanese Zen poet of the Gozan era, Gidō Shūshin:

> Miserably cold, the temple before dawn,
> Still and lonely, few monks to be seen;
> The temple is old, with soot-blackened walls,
> The pond overgrown, its surface like folds in a robe;
> Incense before the Buddha has burned, gone out, turned cold,
> The sermon over, blossoms fly in the rain;
> I've reached the point of doing away with happiness and sadness—
> A white board door swinging to and fro in the breeze. (Pollack 47)

The swaying emotions of happiness and sadness still arise like a door swinging in and out, but one does not separate oneself from the coming and going of ordinary emotions by trying either to avoid sorrow and pursue a permanent state of happiness like an addiction or eliminate feelings altogether. As mentioned in the introduction, Watson and Blofield see Han-shan's poems as a series of failures and successes on his religious path. This is partially true, but Han-shan's successes and failures at realizing the Buddhist ideal are the inverse of what these scholars assume. Han-shan's failure to be always content and beyond human emotions and attachments is his realization of his selflessness, impermanence, and humanity. In contrast, Han-shan's occasional conflations of his joy of reclusion to be a permanent, transcendent condition are failures to realize his impermanent and human nature.

Han-shan himself provides a nondual view of enlightenment as not separate from desire. Henricks translates the following poem as:

> Have you not seen the dew that descends in the morn?
> With the sparkling rays of the sun, of itself it dispels and is gone.
>
> Man's life is also like this;
> Jambudvīpa[24] — this is just where we stop over awhile.
>
> Never, never pass your time just going along;
> Moreover, you must cause the three poisons to leave.
>
> Wisdom must take the place of delusion;
> You must totally make this so — let no delusion remain. (Henricks 292)

[24] In the cosmology of Mount Sumeru, "Jambudvīpa is the Indian name of the continent on which we live" (Henricks 292).

But Henricks notes that the second to last line literally says, "*bodhi* is none other than *kleśa*," (Henricks 293), or in other words, "enlightenment itself is delusion." Henricks' translation misses the point by imposing a dualistic interpretation onto the nondual message of the original. Han-shan is simultaneously advocating the abandonment of the three poisons (anger, desire, and ignorance) while saying that delusive passions are themselves enlightenment. In the last line, he says "let no delusion remain" or as Red Pine translates: "let there be nothing left at all" (Red Pine 1983, #208). Delusion in the final line comes to mean the duality of enlightenment and delusive passions. When there is "no delusion" or "nothing left at all" there is a complete nonduality of delusion and enlightenment, nirvana and samsara. The three part logic of Zen is evident here: first, there is delusion; then delusion is no other than enlightenment; finally, delusion is delusion again. Delusive passions are thus transcended only by accepting one's own ignorance and desire. Since Han-shan does not have any transcendent wisdom, he describes himself as neither a wise man nor a fool. His wisdom is that he knows the ignorance and desire inherent in his human nature, and this mundane wisdom liberates him from arrogant assertions of knowledge and transcendence.

Ryōkan

Like those that admire him as a Zen master, Ryōkan also depicts his life in an apparently transcendent manner, and in some poems he suggests that he is unaffected by the concerns of ordinary life:

> My nature is to be free of attachment
> Whatever I do, my thoughts are at ease (from Abé and Haskel 113)

It is often his simple life of reclusion that prompts his contemplation on the freedom of his life. After reading the poems of Han-shan in his hut, he asks, "What is there to worry about / what is there to trouble me?" (Abé and Haskel 126), and he paints himself as living in a mode of ideal non-attachment in which he does not discriminate between good and bad: "I'm naturally happy, whatever comes my way" (Abé and Haskel 201).

But, more often his poems express his humble way of life, his sorrow for friends, teachers, and relatives who have passed away, and his loneliness in reclusion. Ryōkan associates his lonely life of poverty with the image of his "empty bowl."

> Shivering in the autumn wind
> I find shelter for two nights
>   in a pious home
> One robe and one bowl
> This is my life, simple and pure (Abé and Haskel 146)

These are the poems that some scholars see as evidence of his failure at Zen, and Ryōkan remarks on his own lack of success:

> As a boy, I studied the arts, failing to become a scholar.
> In youth, I studied zen, failing to obey my master's lamp.
> I now live in a grassy cottage, merged in a Shinto shrine,
> Not unlike a shrine-keeper, or unlike a prophet of Buddha. (Yuasa #88, 66)[25]

However, as Abé has noted (Abé and Haskel 36), Ryōkan never ceased to engage in Buddhist practice and employ Buddhist themes. If we examine Ryōkan's own

[25] As a boy I studied literature,
   but was too lazy to become a Confucian;
in my young days I worked at Zen,
   but got no Dharma worth handing down. (Watson 1977, 99)

interpretation of enlightenment and Buddhist realization, he gives us a non-transcendent view of Zen practice that can help make sense of his simultaneous Buddhist practice and expressions of sorrow.

Ryōkan, like Han-shan, provides a similar model of realization and buddha-nature that is nondual and non-transcendent. Ryōkan is very clear that his Zen training did not allow him to become anything special nor did it change him in any fundamental way. This is not to say his Zen training failed in its purpose, but that it served to reveal the nature of his ordinary being.

> When I was young, I abandoned my father
>   and ran off to other domains
> I struggled hard to paint a tiger
> But couldn't even come up with a cat
> If anyone asks about my realization, I'll say:
> "Just the same old Eizō." (Abé and Haskel 142)

As Eizō is Ryōkan's given name from before he became a monk, it is evident that Ryōkan did not attain anything extraordinary. While Ryōkan very humbly admits that he hardly lived up to his ideal of becoming a tiger, he does not deny having insight. Although his realization may appear to be trivial and irrelevant, unlike the arrogance and power associated with becoming a tiger, its selflessness and humility are consistent with the idea of no self. In other poems, Ryōkan explicitly identifies the relationship between the nature of insight and the absence of change.

> How many years I spent parting the wild grasses
>   to penetrate the inmost depths
> Then suddenly I understood my teacher
>   and came back to my native place
> You go there and come back again
> Yet everything remains the same
> Clouds covering the mountain's summit

Streams flowing by at your feet (Abé and Haskel 148)

This poem is reminiscent of a well-known Chinese poem, attributed to Su Tung-p'o, that explicitly makes the point that after is the same as before:

> Misty rain on Mount Lu, tide in the River Che;
> If I do not go there, a thousand regrets will never let me be.
> I went and returned, it was nothing special:
> Misty rain on Mount Lu, tide in the River Che. (Hori 2003, 595)

As Abé notes (Abé and Haskel 67-68), Ryōkan's poem can be read as both a description of his life (going to the monastery and then returning to his home) and of the Buddhist path. His understanding from "parting the wild grasses" (delusive thoughts) brings him back to his "native place," his original buddha-nature, without any fundamental change. The final images of clouds and streams are manifestations of the impermanence that is characteristic of the original nature of Ryōkan and all things. The interplay between conventional and ultimate meanings is found in the image of his "native place," which effectively represents both his home village (the conventional interpretation) and buddha-nature (the ultimate interpretation). The banality of the literal, conventional interpretation is essential in highlighting the ordinariness of its symbolic meaning; buddha-nature is not something to be found outside of everyday experience and phenomena. Like Han-shan, Ryōkan rejects the idea of a path that leads to a separate, extra-ordinary state of enlightenment.

> No path leads us to our spiritual awakening
> Nor do we find our destination
> When we catch sight of
> Some state of enlightenment and pursue it directly
> We shall find it receding from us farther than ever.
> (from Kodama and Yanagishima 93)

Enlightenment is not an object that can be grasped or attained as impermanence and selflessness are manifest in all phenomenal experience.

Despite the evident realization of his nature, Ryōkan, unlike many of his admirers, does not make any claim to enlightenment (or *satori*).

> All my life too lazy to try to get ahead,
> I leave everything to the truth of Heaven.
> In my sack three measures of rice,
> by the stove one bundle of sticks—
> why ask who's got satori, who hasn't?
> What would I know about that dust, fame and gain?
> Rainy nights here in my thatched hut
> I stick out my two legs any old way I please. (Watson 1977, 89)

Judgments of enlightenment and delusion are based in the dualistic and self-centered perspectives of worldly minds, and Ryōkan warns not to get attached to idealistic concepts that miss the point of Buddhist teachings. Abé comments, "As if mocking the polemic of modern Ryōkan scholarship, Ryōkan asserts that, to be genuinely enlightened, practitioners must free themselves from the dualities of 'enlightenment' and 'nonenlightenment'" (Abé and Haskel 42). Ryōkan does discard the duality between enlightenment and delusion, but he is not exactly free "from" this duality since he also distinguishes between the two, as does Abé in the above quote ("genuinely enlightened"). Abé wants to maintain a distinction between enlightenment and duality, but he fails to both distinguish and identify them. "While enlightenment and nonenlightenment are inseparably intertwined, the latter, like the waves, is secondary, transient, and has no innate essence . . . . To attain enlightenment is . . . to realize thoroughly the indestructible quality of the originally enlightened mind amid the ever-changing waves of ignorance" (Abé and Haskel 44). A stronger claim can be made for the identification of

enlightenment and delusion, however; according to Mahāyāna Buddhist rhetoric, enlightenment and delusion are not merely interconnected, enlightenment itself is delusion. The goddess in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* explains the connection and pokes fun at the dualistic definition of enlightenment (such as the one given by Blofield in the introduction): "'Liberation is freedom from desire, hatred, and folly' —that is the teaching for the excessively proud. But those free of pride are taught that the very nature of desire, hatred, and folly is itself liberation" (Thurman 60). Abé reifies enlightenment as being a superior entity "amid" but not "as" delusion itself. But enlightenment does not have an "innate essence" either, and when enlightenment itself is delusion, enlightenment, thus, becomes defined by the complete absence of enlightenment. It is this absence of enlightenment that Ryōkan displays in his poetry, and it is the delusion that an independent, permanent state of enlightenment exists that Ryōkan strives to dispel. Therein lies the identity and difference of enlightenment and delusion.

> Delusion and enlightenment
>   two sides of a coin
> Universal and particular
>   just parts of one whole
> All day I read the wordless scriptures
> All night I practice no-practice meditation
> On the riverbank, a bush warbler
>   sings in the weeping willow
> In the sleeping village, a dog bays at the moon
> Nothing troubles the free flow of my feelings
> But how can this mind be passed on? (Abé and Haskel 155)

His feelings are not impeded by his Buddhist practice but flow freely. At the same time, Ryōkan recognizes that desire leads to suffering, as in this passage reminiscent of the *Tao Te Ching*:

Desire nothing, and you're content with everything
Pursue things, and you're thwarted at every turn
(from Abé and Haskel 196)

In the following poem, Ryōkan appears to advocate the avoidance of human bonds because of the inevitable suffering created through their impermanence:

We meet, we part
Free as white clouds that come and go
All that remains
 are the fugitive traces of brush and ink
The world of human bonds
 is not the place to find what we seek (Abé and Haskel 171)

However, even though human bonds are a source of suffering, loneliness, attachment, and sadness, Ryōkan cannot help but desire and enjoy friendship, and he even describes himself as "Chained by the bond of attachment to my native village" (Yuasa 61). He desires companionship when he's lonely, he is sad about things that have passed away, and he had a strong attraction to the nun Teishin at the end of his life. Ryōkan sees his feelings as part of the conditions and causes of his life:

What is this life of mine?
Rambling on, I entrust myself to fate.
Sometimes laughter, sometimes tears. (from Stevens 2004, 25)

He does not seek to separate himself from the emotions of happiness or sadness as he explains:

Let me laugh when I am inclined to;
Let me shed tears when I am sad!
Indeed, I am neither for the world not against it.
(Kodama and Yanagishima 21)

This last line is key to understanding Ryōkan's relationship to the ordinary world. He realizes that the world is impermanent and insubstantial; he knows that

desires lead to suffering, but nevertheless he is not independent from desire, suffering, or impermanence, and he constantly contrasts the non-attached ideal of the Buddhist to his real, ordinary life.

> Now and then
> I hear leaves falling
> While sitting alone.
> I have cut off my ties
> With the world, and yet
> Why should I shed tears? (Kodama and Yanagishima 86)

Abé insists that Ryōkan's expressions of sadness and failure are not to be taken literally but as figurative expressions. If his poems are taken literally, not only will his life appear to have been sorrowful but because of the contrast between his expressions of detachment and failure, his poems "only provide conflicting pictures of his daily life" (Abé and Haskel 36). Abé, relying on Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history, sees the problem with the literal interpretation of Ryōkan's poems is that poems are not reliable, historical records (Abé and Haskel 36). Abé argues that Ryōkan's descriptive poems are really metaphorical and redescriptive and cites Paul Ricoeur's theory on the power of metaphor to "redescribe reality" (Abé and Haskel 37). "Poetic reference arises out of the suspension by the metaphorical of the literal reference, a suspension that generates a condition to unleash poetry's power to redescribe what is conventionally accepted as reality" (Abé and Haskel 38). But Ryōkan's function as a Zen poet is not to deny literal interpretation nor divide the metaphorical significance from its literary meaning. Not only is this a dualistic approach to literature and metaphor, but it is not an approach or a distinction generally accepted by the poetics of Chinese and Japanese literature or Ryōkan

himself. Like Ki no Tsurayuki's expressive theory of poetry discussed in Chapter Two, Ryōkan's feelings are supposed to be his genuine response to nature. Ryōkan followed the Japanese aesthetic principle of *mono no aware*, a heightened attention to the sadness and beauty of fleeting, natural objects, which was popular among contemporary critics like Motōri Norinaga (1730-1801), who upheld the view that "poetry is produced when the human heart is moved by the beauty of things" and Kamo no Mabuchi (1697-1769) whose disciple was in contact with Ryōkan and who advocated the quality of *makoto* (sincerity), which he defined as: "Whenever one has an emotion in one's heart, one voices it spontaneously, producing poetry" (Yuasa 6, 7). Ryōkan's attention to his natural reaction to phenomena is illustrated by Abé and Haskel's own translation:

> Human beings are not metal or stone
> As the seasons change
>   my heart can't help but respond (from Abé and Haskel 194)

Ryōkan's role as a Zen poet is to realize the nature of reality, including his very human emotions, and put it forth in language, not to create a fictional account of the way things are. This is not to say that there are not fictional, metaphorical, and often exaggerated elements to Ryōkan's poems, but that these elements are only intended to exaggerate, point to, and express the reality of the conventional world and ordinary feelings (which are nevertheless illusory).

Abé sees Ryōkan's poems of foolishness and failure as primarily a political tool to distinguish himself from conventional Buddhist institutions:

> Ryōkan's strategy . . . is playful ridicule: he quietly, yet unmistakably, juxtaposes his own life of mendicancy with the institutionalized monastic life. Ryōkan deconstructs the hegemonic authority of the monastic establishment by exposing its discriminatory posture of the privileged

> over the masses . . . . Then, by way of contrast, Ryōkan presents his humble routine of begging among the villagers as a model for rectification. From the viewpoint of the institutional establishment, Ryōkan, who left monastic life without establishing himself in the Sōtō hierarchy, is a failure. But it is precisely because of his failure that Ryōkan's criticism is effective . . . . (Abé and Haskel 54-55)

Abé, ironically, deconstructs the religious significance of failure as well as the literary and religious significance of genuine emotion and essentializes the metaphorical and political function. For Abé, Ryōkan is only a "religious-cultural hero" in political terms of his Marxist-like challenge of hierarchy and "repressive authority," and his commiseration with the poor and "underprivileged" (Abé and Haskel 58). As well, his suffering is primarily a political tool and does not lend significance to any religious insight or realization on Ryōkan's part. It is true that Ryōkan is concerned with the suffering of the poor and he is critical of Buddhist priests and those who pursue wealth and fame. But, his primary concern is delusion and suffering that are not dependent on class but are inherent in every individual. His identification with the suffering of others is not limited to the poor, and his commiseration is most often for those who pursue wealth and fame.

For Abé, suffering is instrumental as metaphor, political criticism, and compassion but has little to do with Ryōkan's own human nature and Buddhist realization. Abé uses the Bodhisattva model to interpret Ryōkan's suffering as commiseration with the suffering of others (Abé and Haskel 58). Abé explains: "Because of the 'illness'—that is, the ability to suffer—the practicers of the bodhisattva path understand the nature of the suffering of the other beings. However, because their illness is metaphorical of compassion, they escape from being consumed by it and remain optimistic about the possibility of saving

others" (Abé and Haskel 59). Abé admits that Ryōkan feels suffering, but he also "always escapes from being consumed by" suffering (Abé and Haskel 69). The meaning of being "consumed" by suffering is quite vague but nevertheless, unsubstantiated in Ryōkan's poems. In general he is not demonstrating his ability to identify with the suffering of others but is expressing his often unbearable personal sorrow. It is not just his ability to suffer, seen as compassion from a detached, metaphorical perspective, it is Ryōkan's failure to transcend suffering that connects him to the suffering of other's and reveals his own humanity.

> *Begging for Rice*
>
> A solitary three-mat hut
> A pitiful, worn-out old body
> It's worse still now, in the depths of winter
> My suffering can't be described (Abé and Haskel 171)

Furthermore, he is hardly optimistic about saving others and presents his dejection and sorrow in response to the endless passions of the world. His desire to protect and save all humans and sentient beings arises from a feeling of hopelessness and inability and is imbued with sadness and despair rather than optimism.

> How deeply I am concerned
> With the sorrows of the world
> And as often am I
> Quite at a loss what to do! (Kodama and Yanagishima 26)
>
> If my arms draped in these black robes
> Were only wide enough
> How gladly I would shelter in them
> All the people of this floating world (Abé and Haskel 211)

Suffering, of course, is the root of his compassion, and he does identify with the suffering of others:

When I think about the sadness of the people
  in this world,
Their sadness becomes mine. (Stevens 1977, 76)

However, Ryōkan is not a savior figure for whom suffering is a mere metaphor; he is a normal human being whose only salvation comes from giving up self-driven attempts and egotistical notions of saving himself and others. He desires to save himself and all others, but he cannot; he is only an ordinary person. The selfless realization that he is unable to transcend his own sadness is itself the greatness of Ryōkan.

   So many reports
Of the Land of Lasting Joy
   Have edified me,
Yet never can I get there,
Not knowing the road to go. (Yuasa #389, 155)

Suffering and sadness are not just tools to aid others but are key to the realization of Ryōkan's own impermanence and humanity. According to Stephen Heine, Dōgen, the founder of Ryōkan's Sōtō school, held "an emotional attunement to impermanence," similar to the aesthetic concept of *mono no aware*, to be essential to his own poetry (Heine 22). Dōgen was of course an extremely strong influence on Ryōkan, who alludes to Dōgen's writings in his poems; in one famous poem, he cries in response to reading Dōgen's works since he feels people fail to see the truth in his words. Ryōkan also displays in his poetry the following ideal of Dōgen, described by Heine: "Genuine spiritual realization must be found by embracing — rather than by eliminating — one's emotional response to variability and inevitable loss" (Heine 29). Heine explains the relation between no self and sorrow: the experience of sorrow in response to

impermanence is necessary for the detachment from one's ego and for giving up of one's self. This is in contrast to a monochrome-type detachment that separates the subject from ordinary emotions and phenomena and makes for bad poetry.

> The aesthetic perception — or awakening of an aesthetically attuned heart — dislodges even a priest's clinging to the view that perishability is something objective and apart from one's own existence by highlighting the way it pervades subjectivity. Therefore, the refined emotion of sorrow is more conducive than strict detachment to exploring the existential depths of enlightenment. (Heine 30)

The emotion of sadness not only dismantles the logical and detached viewpoint that it is futile to chase after illusions of permanence but brings the logic of no self to its full conclusion. In the preliminary stage of nondual logic, one can adopt the rational perspective that divides the states of dualistic attachment and nondual detachment; however, the experience of sadness brings the practitioner back into the realm of the emotional and fulfills the nondual conclusion that attachment and detachment cannot be separate. It is emotion rather than rational thought that arises as the impetus for transcending the conventional, self-centered, and logical reification of worldly detachment.

One wonders why Ryōkan ends so many poems with tears to the point that the theme often becomes trite and cliché. Certain poems are truly suffused with a profound sense of sadness, but in many, tears appear as a conventional response to impermanence and death. Ryōkan's point must be to continuously draw attention to both human impermanence and human emotion that are the roots of compassion and selflessness. This is Ryōkan's humble offering to the world. He cannot provide any cure for suffering or maintain an air of detachment; all he has to offer is the simple fact of ordinary emotion:

But for sheer loneliness
Of a mountain hut in winter,
What could I treat you to
As I can offer nothing else. (Kodama and Yanagishima 61)

By reading Ryōkan's poems as a sincere expression of his heart/mind as in the expressive-affective model of interpretation, we see that while Ryōkan describes his failure to transcend suffering and the attachments of the world and while this description retains its literal validity, he simultaneously expresses a non-attached and selfless attitude to any arrogant notion of detaching himself from ordinary existence and experience. These poems of genuine expression neither describe nor symbolize the concept of no self but, as in the performative model, provide a concrete example of the workings of the selfless mind.

One of Ryōkan's poems in particular symbolically connects the experience of ordinary emotion with enlightenment:

In the world of dreams
I've been dreaming on and on
And upon waking up
How loneliness pierces me (Kodama and Yanagishima 77)

If dreams and "waking up" are interpreted according to their conventional associations with illusion and enlightenment, then it is on awakening that Ryōkan truly realizes his suffering and ordinary human emotion. It is only in the world of dreams that Ryōkan can pretend not to be afflicted by the passions of the world.

Ryōkan's awakening to his ordinary human nature parallels the theory of trans-descendence. He is simultaneously transcending delusion of the world and descending back down into it. Ryōkan presents an image of the Buddhist path consistent with the model of trans-descendence in his own poetry:

Buddha's return to the world

This is the road he traveled in his escape from the world.
This is the road he traveled upon his return to the world.
In going and coming we must march along this sacred avenue
Through life and death, shiny false flowers on either side.
(Yuasa #198, 102)

This is not a description of two different roads, but one road that simultaneously transcends from and descends to the world. Yuasa's choice of the words "either side" is appropriate to the idea of illusion ("shiny false flowers") as clinging to either side of the path. In other words, there is no escape from the world without return; there is no other world to escape to or self to escape. The ascendance of enlightenment is mediated by the descendance of compassion, when one realizes that one shares in the suffering of all beings. In the context of no self, the salvation of oneself is dependent on the salvation of others, and that salvation is none other than the giving up of one's self — without attachment to one's individual desires and without attachment to one's individual transcendence.

Ryōkan's failure and inability to transcend suffering is his selflessness — his giving up of egotistical notions — and thus, his salvation. This is not a salvation *from* suffering, but a salvation that derives from his complete identification with suffering and his act of forgetting the self. He forgets about the self as something independent from suffering. Suffering is not seen as an external phenomena imposing on the self nor is the self seen as an agent able to free itself from the world of suffering. To summarize Ryōkan's message, there are no better words than those of Teishin, the nun with whom Ryōkan shared a deep affection:

We monastics are said
To overcome the realm
Of life and death—
Yet I cannot bear the
Sorrow of our parting. (Stevens 2004, 101)

Conclusion

Han-shan and Ryōkan both exemplify a non-transcendent ideal, which is consistent with the logic of Zen Buddhism and which permeates their poetic and reclusive lives along with their religious practice and goals. Their ideas of buddha-nature and enlightenment are based on the realization of the immediate and original nature of conventional reality as impermanent and empty, and they both reject the idea of transcending the ordinary world and its desires. Enlightenment and buddha-nature are not objects to be grasped nor elevated states to be attained but form a process of complete identification with the nature of things.

Han-shan and Ryōkan illustrate their identification with emptiness and impermanence through their poetry. The content of Han-shan's and Ryōkan's poems as well as their poetic practice transcend the dualities of language and silence, withdrawal and engagement, and even the duality of transcendence and attachment. These poets do not seek to transcend words but engage in literary activity without attachment to self-promotion or the self-sufficiency of language. They effect an unconventional poetry for the purpose of conveying their hearts/minds to their readers, advocating and manifesting direct experience, and challenging the fixed dualities of language. At the same time, they express their indebtedness to the literary tradition and engage in language and tradition in a direct and accessible manner without intention to establish an image of literary eloquence. As well, their poems intend to confront their readers with the

impermanence of reality and reveal the poets' own human experience rather than merely display intelligence and wit.

Reclusion is ideal as a mode of realizing no self through the identification of nature and through the renunciation of self-centered pursuits, while poetry is the means for the poet to engage within society while simultaneously remaining withdrawn from the world. The recluse is often associated with silence as the withdrawal from society parallels the withdrawal from language, but for Han-shan and Ryōkan, their poetry and reclusion illustrate a simultaneous transcendence of and descendence to the world. They engage in society and language from a standpoint that rejects the pursuit of worldly gain as well as the ultimate significance, efficacy, and exclusiveness of the dualities of language, and it is only through language and social engagement that these perspectives of reclusion and ineffable experience can be transmitted. The recluse not only embodies the paradox that reclusion itself is a social and political act but also the paradox of language. As Paula Varsano indicates, "The figure of the recluse, as a locus of contradictory and mutually dependent moral ideals, closely mirrors the medium of poetry, that territory where language and the ineffable meet and give sustenance one to the other" (Varsano 70).

The realms of poetry and reclusion also serve as contexts to both communicate and realize Buddhist trans-descendence. Since Han-shan and Ryōkan both subscribe to a poetics based on the direct expression of genuine emotion, instead of dividing feelings of attachment from religious realization as previous scholars have done, I have reconciled these expressions of sorrow with

the Zen Buddhist ideal. Sorrow not only provokes deep awareness of the impermanence of oneself and others but also connects the poets to the ordinary suffering and desires of humanity. Without intention, their expressions of sorrow attest to their inability to transcend emotions and human attachments. Read from the expressive-effective model, these are expressions of their selfless hearts/minds that have given up egotistical grasping for a special state or experience outside of everyday reality and reveal insight into the nature of their humanity. Reclusion effectively aids in the realization of one's dependence on society and one's attachment to human bonds. In this way, feelings of loneliness and longing for companionship are essential to deconstruct the notion of an independent and detached self. For Ryōkan in particular the emotion of sadness engenders compassion for the suffering of others, and Han-shan too is affected by the sorrow in the world and is connected to others through it.

Han-shan and Ryōkan demonstrate an attitude consistent with the logic of non-transcendence or trans-descendence. As with the second stage of nondual logic, they reject the common perception that things have permanent and independent essences, and they reject the pursuit of selfish desires based on this common standpoint. With the knowledge of emptiness and impermanence that arises at this stage, one can claim to be detached from the desires for permanence and self-interest. In the final stage, however, the stage of trans-descendence, the poets return to the ordinary passions of the world. While they understand the impermanence of things and do not return to a reification of self-essences, they are not separate from human bonds or desires for permanence. The pursuit of

selfish desire is still denied, but the poets are forced to admit the existence of delusive passions.

In conclusion, the Zen master and the Zen failure need not be mutually exclusive. Failing to attain a dualistic state of enlightenment is itself the profound insight that enacts a truly nondual mode of being. All self-centered attempts to improve one's condition and attain a particular Zen state of transcendence are thus swept aside, and the inevitable arising of human emotion is the key to a nondual realization. When examined from the perspective of the nonduality of enlightenment and delusion, enlightenment never appears as enlightenment, only as delusion. It is only through Han-shan's and Ryōkan's confessions of selfish desires that their selfless minds are truly revealed. The true transcendence of selfish attachment turns out to be no transcendence at all.

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